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An Introduction to the  
Thessalonian Epistles



# An Introduction to the Thessalonian Epistles

Containing a vindication of the Pauline  
Authorship of both Epistles and an  
interpretation of the Eschatological  
section of 2 Thess. ii.

by

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## PREFACE.

IT is in the hope that he may some day be able to complete a Commentary on the Epistles to the Thessalonians that the writer of this volume invites criticism of the points here dealt with, and in particular of his treatment, in the fifth chapter, of the Eschatology of the second Epistle.

CAMBRIDGE,

*February, 1902.*



# CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS . . .	1
---------------------------------------	---

## CHAPTER II.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES	29
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

OBJECTIONS TO THE GENUINENESS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE CONSIDERED . . . . .	53
--	----

## CHAPTER IV.

THE GENUINENESS OF THE SECOND EPISTLE . . .	76
---	----

## CHAPTER V.

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SECTION OF 2 THESSALO- NIANS ii. . . . .	106
--	-----



# ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS.

	PAGE
The Thessalonian Epistles the earliest of the extant Pauline Epistles . . . . .	1
Purpose of this enquiry . . . . .	2
Assumptions of present chapter . . . . .	4
The first Epistle addressed to converts from heathenism .	4
The apparent discrepancy between this fact and the narrative of Acts . . . . .	7
St Paul's stay in Thessalonica and the success of his teaching	14
The Apostle's manner of life and teaching gleaned from first Epistle . . . . .	16
The expulsion from Thessalonica and subsequent movements	21
The mission of Timothy . . . . .	24
The writing of the first Epistle . . . . .	24
The need for the second Epistle . . . . .	26
The movements of Silas and Timothy between Berea and Corinth . . . . .	26

## CHAPTER II.

### THE GENUINENESS OF THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES.

The similarity between the two Epistles . . . . .	30
Baur's judgment on the same . . . . .	33
Its unsatisfactoriness . . . . .	34
Plan of enquiry . . . . .	35

	PAGE
The external evidence for the genuineness of the Epistles . . . . .	39
(1) Apostolic Fathers.	
(a) The witness of Polycarp's Epistle to 2 Thess.	40
(b) The witness of the Ignatian Epistles to 1 Thess.	49
(2) Subsequent times . . . . .	52

### CHAPTER III.

#### OBJECTIONS TO THE GENUINENESS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE CONSIDERED.

The attitude of Schrader and Baur . . . . .	53
Objections based on	
(1) The un-Pauline character of certain phrases and passages . . . . .	55
(2) Incongruities in the Epistle itself . . . . .	59
(3) Anachronisms . . . . .	60
Examination of 1 Thess. i. 8 . . . . .	65
The personal character of the Epistle . . . . .	70
Supposed un-Pauline language of Epistle respecting the Jews	71
No motive for Epistle if it be not genuine . . . . .	74

### CHAPTER IV.

#### THE GENUINENESS OF THE SECOND EPISTLE.

A possible motive for forgery . . . . .	77
The supposed contradiction between second Epistle and first	78
Examination of Dr Davidson's objections . . . . .	79
Different aspects of the eschatological sections of the two Epistles . . . . .	82
Spitta's theory of Timothean authorship of 2 Thessalonians	85
Meaning of <i>ἐτι</i> in ii. 5 . . . . .	87
Arguments based on comparison of two Epistles in favour of difference of authorship insufficient . . . . .	88
On the phrase <i>ὡς δι' ἡμῶν</i> in 2 Thess. ii. 2 . . . . .	92
The <i>σημεῖον</i> of iii. 17 . . . . .	101
Can the eschatological section be said to be un-Pauline? . . . . .	103

## CHAPTER V.

## THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SECTION OF 2 THESSALONIANS ii.

	PAGE
Assumptions of this chapter . . . . .	106
'Futurist' interpretations of section under consideration excluded . . . . .	107
Possible meanings of ἀποστασία . . . . .	108
No ground for interpreting as Christian apostasy . . . . .	110
Possibility of	
(1) Apostasy within Judaism	
(2) Apostasy within Heathendom . . . . .	111
Criticism of Weiss . . . . .	113
Bousset's theory of Antichrist legend . . . . .	117
Evidence for it insufficient . . . . .	121
Dependence of St Paul on our Lord's eschatological discourse	124
Destruction of Jerusalem and the Parousia . . . . .	126
2 Thess. ii. 3 ff. gives St Paul's view of the Lord's predictions interpreted by the circumstances of the time . . . . .	129
The reference in ἀποστασία . . . . .	130
The unrest of the Jews . . . . .	131
The policy of Claudius . . . . .	131
The application of ὁ κατέχων . . . . .	132
The 'Man of Lawlessness' . . . . .	133
Objections to our interpretation . . . . .	135
The 'Abomination of Desolation' . . . . .	135
The Parousia of Christ in relation to Emperor-worship . . . . .	138
The function of prophecy . . . . .	139
Possibility of interpreting ἀποστασία in religious sense . . . . .	140
The 'Man of Lawlessness' and the Roman Empire . . . . .	142
The naturalness of our interpretation . . . . .	143
Apocalypse and Enigma . . . . .	144





## CHAPTER I.

## THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS.

A SPECIAL interest attaches to the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, because, on the hypothesis of their genuineness, they are the earliest of all the extant Pauline Epistles. For of the others none are earlier than the third missionary journey, unless, with Professor Ramsay, we date the Epistle to the Galatians just before that journey. I have given my reasons elsewhere<sup>1</sup> for dissenting from Professor Ramsay on this point, and for agreeing with Lightfoot that the Galatian Epistle belongs to the third missionary journey, and that chronologically it falls between the second Epistle to the Corinthians and the Epistle to the Romans<sup>2</sup>. But whatever difference of opinion there may be on this point it does not affect the statement made above that the two Epistles to the

<sup>1</sup> *The Destination and Date of the Epistle to the Galatians*, chapters VII. and VIII.

<sup>2</sup> I am quite unable to agree with those critics who regard the Ep. to the Galatians as the earliest of the extant Pauline Epistles. This Epistle cannot be so far separated from that to the Romans in point of time. This question is discussed in my essay already referred to.

Thessalonians, if genuine, are the earliest of all the extant Epistles of St Paul. For their contents shew that they must belong to the second missionary journey when Silas and Timothy were St Paul's companions. Both Epistles are addressed by "Paul and Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians"; and there is nothing to lead us to suppose that these three were all together, engaged in missionary work, except on the second missionary journey of St Paul. That they were companions on that occasion is known from the narrative of the Acts. Even those who dispute the genuineness of these Epistles allow that they are made to seem to belong to this time. Nor has any place from which they could have been written been suggested more likely than Corinth, where St Paul settled no less than a year and six months, teaching the word of God (Acts xviii. 11).

Not the least interesting feature of the Thessalonian Epistles is their eschatological teaching, and in particular that of the second Epistle. The eschatological section of this Epistle (ii. 1—12) is admittedly one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament, and the interpretations which have been given of it are perhaps more numerous and more diverse than those which have been attached to any other passage, except some equally difficult sections of the Apocalypse of St John.

It is the chief purpose of this introduction to

offer yet another interpretation of the eschatology of 2 Thessalonians. But it will be seen that this question is not treated before the last chapter; and it will be well to explain at the outset what is the bearing of the rest of the book upon its principal subject.

There are several critics, but they are a decreasing number, who deny the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians. Some few have gone so far as to assert that neither of the two Thessalonian Epistles is genuine. It is important then that a writer who has an interpretation of the eschatology of the second Epistle to offer should be clear as to his reasons for regarding the passage he essays to interpret as the work of St Paul. Accordingly this introduction will set forth the writer's reasons for thinking the passage to be genuine. It is impossible to do this satisfactorily without investigating the relation of the second Epistle to the first, and without some enquiry into the genuineness of the first Epistle as well as that of the second. In the earlier chapters of this short work, then, reasons will be given for regarding both the Epistles as genuinely Pauline, and the writer will proceed in the last chapter to the interpretation of the eschatology of the second Epistle in no uncertainty as to its authorship, and in full reliance upon the historical circumstances of the time of its composition for its interpretation.

It is of the first importance that the treatment of

our subject should be historical. The Thessalonian Epistles must be seen in their proper place in the apostolic history to be appreciated and interpreted. In this first chapter then I intend to leave the controversy on the genuineness of the Epistles wholly on one side. I shall here assume the two Epistles to be by St Paul, and this I do in order to set forth their historical setting on the hypothesis of their genuineness. For it seems well to enquire whether these Epistles taken along with such part of the narrative of the Acts as is relevant to our subject make up a consistent whole. I shall in the next three chapters enter at some length into the question of the genuineness of the Epistles. But I wish to make it clear at once that it is no part of my purpose in these pages to discuss the authenticity of the Acts. Without making any assumption here as to the author or authors of that book I shall take for granted that the narrative is generally reliable as a statement of historical fact.

This much premised, we proceed to make use of our authorities, viz. the Acts and two Thessalonian Epistles, to obtain a picture of the infant Christian community in Thessalonica and of St Paul's relations to it.

An examination of the first Epistle leaves no room for doubt that the majority of those addressed in it had been, before their conversion to the faith of

## THE CHURCH OF THE THESSALONIANS.

Christ, heathen Gentiles. There are three passages in the Epistle which make this certain.

1. In 1 Thess. i. 9 those addressed are reminded that they had "turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God"; and the implication of the context is that this turning to God was the result of the preaching of the gospel by Paul and Silas and Timothy, who conjointly address the Thessalonian church in this Epistle—the plural pronoun (*ἡμεῖς*) being used almost throughout the Epistle. It could not of course have been said of Jews who accepted Christianity that they had turned from idols, nor could this have been said of the *σεβόμενοι*. These last, though not committed to an observance of the whole Jewish law, were at any rate worshippers of the one God<sup>1</sup>.

2. Again in ii. 14 ff. we have: "For ye, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judæa in Christ Jesus: for ye also suffered the same things of your own countrymen, even as they did of the Jews; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drave out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles (*τοῖς ἔθνεσιν*) that they may be saved."

The context here plainly shews that "their own countrymen" (*τῶν ἰδίων συμφυλετῶν*) were not Jews.

3. Lastly the exhortation given in iv. 1—5 points

<sup>1</sup> On the *σεβόμενοι* see Schürer's *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*. Vol. 2, p. 565 of 2nd German edition.

to the fact that the newly made Christians in Thessalonica had been extricated from the impurities of heathenism. "Finally then, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that, as ye received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, even as ye do walk—that ye abound more and more. For ye know what charge we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to possess himself of his own vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust, even as the Gentiles which know not God."

It is not that St Paul and his co-writers have in mind any special instance of uncleanness or impurity which had actually occurred in the church of the Thessalonians, as for example the case of the incestuous person at Corinth (1 Cor. v. 1) at a later time. Indeed the words *καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε* preclude any such hypothesis. But the Apostle feels the importance of reminding his converts from heathenism of the necessity of continuing to live, not as before their conversion, *ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας* (such an expression could hardly be used of the Jews or of the *σεβόμενοι*), but in purity.

These three passages are sufficient to justify the statement that the larger number of the Thessalonian Christians to whom the first Epistle was addressed were converts from heathenism.

Now in the narrative of the Acts the result of

St Paul's preaching in Thessalonica is summed up in these words: "And some of them [*i.e.* Jews] were persuaded, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few." The text according to Westcott and Hort is:

καί τινες ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐπέσθησαν καὶ προσεκληρώθησαν τῷ Παύλῳ καὶ [τῷ] Σίλῳ, τῶν τε σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων πλῆθος πολὺ γυναικῶν τε τῶν πρώτων οὐκ ὀλίγαι (Acts xvii. 4).

We observe at once that this classification of the Thessalonian converts is hardly in keeping with the conclusion we have reached after an examination of the contents of the first Epistle, that it was addressed to, for the most part, converts from heathenism. It is true that in the Acts there is mention of "not a few of the chief women," who may have been Gentiles other than *σεβόμεναι*, but the words *τῶν σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων πλῆθος πολὺ* would imply that the *σεβόμενοι* or Gentile adherents of the synagogue formed a very large part, indeed the majority of the converts.

So then one of four things would seem to follow from the apparent discrepancy between the Epistle and the narrative of Acts.

1. The Epistle is not genuine.
2. The narrative of Acts is not authentic.
3. The verse we have quoted from the Acts

does not give the *final* result of St Paul's preaching in Thessalonica.

4. The verse in the Acts has not been rightly understood.

The first two of these possibilities we have here nothing to do with; for we are arguing in this chapter on the hypothesis that the Epistle is genuine, and we are assuming throughout that the narrative of the Acts is authentic.

As regards the third explanation given above, it may appear at first sight that there is something to be said in its favour. But there are serious objections to it.

It is true that the book of the Acts records how, when Paul and Silas and Timothy came by road (*διοδεύσαντες*—they would travel by the Via Egnatia), Paul as his custom was went in to the Jews in their synagogue and “for three sabbaths [*or* weeks] reasoned with them from the scriptures, opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I proclaim unto you, is the Christ.” It might be that the verse which follows sums up the result of the synagogue preaching; and that it was subsequent preaching to the general Gentile population which brought about the conversion of that large number addressed in the Thessalonian Epistle, and that of this preaching the Acts records nothing, except it be in the matter of the assaulting of



Jason's house, which would be the Apostle's headquarters.

But there are, as it seems to me, two objections to this. In the first place the jealousy of the Jews (*ζηλώσαντες δὲ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι κ.τ.λ.* following immediately on verse 4) is not explicable unless it were caused by the conversion of, or at any rate preaching to, the Gentile population. This would seem to be implied in verse 4. The author of the Acts assumes, I think, that his readers have become familiar with St Paul's method of procedure to preach first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles in every city to which he went.

And secondly the account of what took place at Berea confirms this last statement. It was to Berea that Paul and Silas went on leaving Thessalonica. In Berea, as in Thessalonica, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts xvii. 11). Then, at once, without any mention of preaching to other than Jews, follows the result of the preaching of the word, which, though it is not recorded that it was so, must have been to Gentiles also; for we read: "Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honourable estate (*καὶ τῶν Ἑλληνίδων γυναικῶν τῶν εὐσχημόνων*), and of men, not a few." Then in answer to the *μὲν οὖν* of *πολλοὶ μὲν οὖν ἐξ*

αὐτῶν ἐπίστευσαν we have the δὲ of the sentence: "But when the Jews of Thessalonica knew that in Berea also was preached by Paul the word of God, they came there also."

We conclude then that the parallel passage telling of what took place in Berea makes it likely that the result of the whole preaching in Thessalonica is intended in Acts xvii. 4.

We must then turn to the fourth explanation given above of the apparent discrepancy between 1 Thessalonians and Acts, and enquire whether we have rightly understood the meaning of the verse in Acts.

We have so far been taking the W.-H. text of Acts xvii. 4. But we must here draw attention to the fact that there is another reading in which καὶ finds a place between σεβόμενων and Ἑλλήνων<sup>1</sup>. The verse would then run somewhat as follows:

"And some of them were persuaded and consorted with Paul and Silas, and a great multitude of the σεβόμενοι and Greeks, with not a few of the chief women<sup>2</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> A. D. 13. 40. 61 and Vulgate.

<sup>2</sup> Or a stop may be made after ἐπίσθησαν. "And some of them were persuaded. Also there were allotted to (or consorted with) Paul and Silas both some of the σεβόμενοι and a great multitude of the Greeks, with not a few of the chief women."

Or if we take the καὶ before Ἑλλήνων to mark the division between the synagogue and non-synagogue converts (καὶ being more disjunctive than is τε—see Winer and Moulton, p. 542) we might render the verse thus: "And some of them were persuaded and consorted with

It will be seen that the insertion of *καὶ* removes the discrepancy which otherwise appears between 1 Thess. i. 9 and the narrative of Acts.

It is an argument in favour of the separation of Ἑλλήνων from τῶν σεβομένων by *καὶ* in verse 4, that no such expression as οἱ σεβόμενοι Ἕλληνες (so far as I am aware) is anywhere else to be found. A Gentile who became a σεβόμενος would still count as Ἕλλην or Gentile, as is shewn by the use of the word Ἕλληνες in St John xii. 20: "There were certain Ἕλληνες among those that went up to worship at the feast." These Ἕλληνες were doubtless σεβόμενοι, for this seems to be implied in their coming up to worship at the feast. But there would be tautology in speaking of οἱ σεβόμενοι Ἕλληνες<sup>1</sup> unless indeed special emphasis were being laid on *nationality* in the word Ἕλληνες. It might be argued that, as Thessalonica was a Greek city, there was special point in speaking of its inhabitants as Ἕλληνες. But then the same might be said of the Athenians. Yet in Acts xvii. 17 we read of τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ τοῖς

Paul and Silas, and (with them) some of the σεβόμενοι, also a great multitude of Greeks and (with them) not a few of the chief women." It must be allowed, however, that τῶν τε σεβομένων is perhaps too far removed from τινες ἐξ αὐτῶν in the sentence to favour this rendering. τῶν σεβομένων may however mean 'some of the σεβόμενοι,' for the partitive genitive is used as a subject without an accompanying nominative. Cf. Acts xxi. 16—συνῆλθον δὲ καὶ τῶν μαθητῶν κ.τ.λ.

<sup>1</sup> It is, however, fair to mention that τῶν σεβομένων προσελύτων in Acts xiii. 43 seems to be a tautological expression.

σεβομένοις without the addition of "Ἑλληνισιν. It does not seem to me that there is any particular stress laid on *nationality* in the use of "Ἕλληγ in the New Testament<sup>1</sup>.

But it must be allowed that the very difficulty which the expression τῶν σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων still presents to our minds may have been the cause of the insertion of καί. Indeed καί may be a 'Western' interpolation.

Or again, the καί may have been inserted to bring the narrative of Acts more into agreement with 1 Thessalonians. This, however, I am inclined to doubt, for it may be questioned whether the discrepancy between the two would have occurred to a copyist. On the supposition that καί is not a part of the original text I should prefer the hypothesis that its insertion was for the purpose of removing the unusual expression τῶν σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων. That this expression was felt to be unusual is shewn by the omission of Ἑλλήνων in certain MSS.<sup>2</sup> A difficulty which had been got over by the removal of Ἑλλήνων at one time may have been solved by the insertion of καί at another.

It may seem then that probabilities of transcription are in favour of the omission of καί.

On the other hand καί may have been a part of the original text, and the lapse of it may have

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Lightfoot's note on Gal. ii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 15. 27. 29. 36. 180.

brought about (as its nemesis) the omission of Ἑλλήνων.

But it may still be the case, even though καὶ be not a part of the original text, that we have not understood the narrative of the Acts rightly, and it may still be possible, by not interpreting σεβομένων too technically, to bring Acts xvii. 4 into agreement with the statement of 1 Thess. i. 9. It has been suggested to me<sup>1</sup> that as there would be different grades of σεβόμενοι, it would be extremely difficult to distinguish the various patrons of a synagogue who were not actually Jews. By τῶν σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων might be meant Gentiles who happened to be in attendance at the synagogue at the time of St Paul's preaching in Thessalonica. Some of them may have been σεβόμενοι in a strict sense, worshippers that is of the God of Israel, but some may have been heathen Gentiles in search of the light, and brought to a decision by the preaching of Paul and Silas. St Paul, acquainted with his converts individually (1 Thess. ii. 11), would know the composition of that Gentile crowd in the synagogue as the author of the Acts might not know it.

It seems reasonable to suppose that St Paul made his Gentile converts at Thessalonica through the synagogue preaching, as had been the case at Antioch

<sup>1</sup> I owe this suggestion to my friend Mr F. C. Burkitt, to whom also I am indebted for the notice given above respecting the omission of Ἑλλήνων.

and Iconium on the first missionary journey<sup>1</sup>. But it is not necessary to conclude from the narrative of the Acts that he and Silas stayed only three weeks at Thessalonica. We gather from the first Epistle that the work had been a decided success, and it is not unreasonable to suppose, as some have done, that they stayed some time there, probably a few months. This supposition receives a confirmation from some words in the Epistle to the Philippians; "And ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship (*ἐκοινωνήσεν*) with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need." (Phil. iv. 15, 16.)

We may in passing note the beauty of the thought implied in the almost untranslatable words *ἐκοινωνήσεν εἰς λόγον δόσεως καὶ λήψεως*. What is intended is partly shewn by the words of verse 17: "Not that I seek for the gift; but I seek for the fruit that increaseth to your account." St Paul cared not for himself but for the promotion of the true *κοινωνία*

<sup>1</sup> See Acts xiii. and xiv. In the synagogue at Antioch on the first sabbath the Apostle made his appeal to the Jews and those of his listeners who 'feared God' (*οἱ ἐν ὑμῖν φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν*, xiii. 26). But the appeal extended further, as vv. 38 and 39 shew. Consequently on the next sabbath almost the whole city came to the synagogue to hear the word of God. Gentiles who were not adherents of the synagogue may have been brought by their friends to hear the preaching of the universal gospel. The opposition of the Jews to this is in contrast with the joy of the Gentiles (*τὰ ἔθνη*) to whom the message was welcome.

between Christian and Christian, that spirit which is the cure for selfish individualism.

To return to Thessalonica. The Apostle's stay there must have been of some duration to give time for the Philippians to send ἄπαξ καὶ δις to supply his need. And the Thessalonian Epistles make it clear that St Paul had found time in Thessalonica to organise a church (1 Thess. v. 12), to give general instruction (1 Thess. v. 1 ff., 2 Thess. ii. 5), and to deal individually with his numerous converts (1 Thess. ii. 11). All this required time.

And we cannot read the first Epistle without detecting throughout it an undercurrent of joy and thankfulness at the fruit of the labour which had been spent in the forming of the church there. "We thank God without ceasing that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (1 Thess. ii. 13)<sup>1</sup>. But it was not without affliction and opposition that these Gentiles embraced the Gospel. They received the word in much affliction (i. 6) and became imitators of the churches of God which were in Judæa in Christ Jesus, and suffered the same things from their own countrymen that the believing Jews had had to suffer from their unbelieving brethren (ii. 14). From the Acts we gather that the opposition was caused by the Jews themselves,

<sup>1</sup> Compare 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20; iv. 9, 10.

who stirred up the rabble to hinder the work of Paul and Silas (Acts xvii. 15). This policy of opposition on the part of the Jews may have been begun some time before it came to a head in the assaulting of the house of Jason where Paul and Silas were. The tumult made official interference on the part of the politarchs necessary, and Paul and Silas had to leave the city. Timothy may have stayed longer in Thessalonica, and have followed the other two to Berœa. But more will be said in the sequel of the movements of all three between the expulsion from Thessalonica and the writing of the Epistles.

We now proceed to glean from the two Epistles something of the Apostle's manner of life when he was in Thessalonica and to collect together some notices of the apostolic teaching at this time.

In 1 Thess. ii. 6 ff. we read: "We might have been burdensome, as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and righteously and unblameably we behaved ourselves toward



you that believe: as ye know how we dealt with each one of you, as a father with his own children, exhorting you, and encouraging you, and testifying, to the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into His own kingdom and glory."

It was something more than a desire not to "burden" his Thessalonian converts that led the Apostle to work with his own hands while he was with them. He was anxious that they should learn Christian habits of industry and not be led to imagine that the Christian life was one of idleness. He wished to give them an illustration of his own teaching: "If any will not work, neither let him eat." This lesson had evidently formed a part of his instruction in practical life, as we can gather from 2 Thess. iii. 6—10: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us (*παρ' ἡμῶν*, referring to direct personal teaching). For yourselves know how ye ought to imitate us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labour and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you: not because we have not the right, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you, that ye should imitate us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat."

The converts then were instructed to be quiet, to do their own business and to work with their own hands (1 Thess. iv. 11): they were to walk honestly towards those without, that is, the non-Christians. They had to remember that their lives affected all with whom they came into contact, even if these were not Christians like themselves. And there was a special attitude of mind inculcated towards the brethren. Here in the earliest extant Epistle of St Paul we have mention of the *φιλαδελφία*, which the Thessalonians had quickly learnt to practise. In iv. 9 we read: "But concerning love-of-the-brethren ye have no need that one write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God (*θεοδίδακτοι*) to love one another; for indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, that ye abound more and more."

We can see too from the earlier verses of the fourth chapter of the first Epistle that careful instruction had been given as to the demands made by the Christian faith upon those who accepted it in the matter of purity of life. This subject is not touched upon, as I have already said, in the Epistle because of any obvious falling short in this matter, as the words "even as ye do walk" of verse 1 plainly shew. The Apostle was evidently deeply convinced of the necessity of insisting on purity of life because he saw how widespread in the heathen world was the mischief of license and sensuality. Writing as he was from

Corinth, a hotbed of vice, his words are full of meaning and earnestness.

So far we have spoken of St Paul's example and instruction to the Thessalonians in practical life. We may turn now to investigate his doctrinal teaching. In the narrative of the Acts bearing on the visit to Thessalonica we have no direct information given to us of the doctrine given to the Gentile converts. Of the preaching to the Jews it is said that Paul as his custom was reasoned with them from the scriptures for three sabbaths, "opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I proclaim unto you, is the Christ." This specially Messianic teaching would be inappropriate for Gentiles, and we may conclude from St Paul's discourse at Athens that he would be more likely to speak to them of God and of judgment by the man whom He had ordained, assurance of which had been given by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. That the apostolic teaching at Thessalonica had been similar to this would seem clear from the words of 1 Thess. i. 9, 10: "For they themselves report concerning us what manner of entering in we had unto you; and how ye turned unto God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come."

From these verses we gather that the apostolic teaching at Thessalonica to the Gentile converts had been of a living and genuine (*ἀληθινῶ*) God, the gods of the heathen being regarded as no gods, and of a great wrath or judgment to come, from which men might get deliverance through Jesus, whom God had raised from the dead. There was coming “the day of the Lord.” Of this in the first Epistle the Apostle writes: “yourselves know perfectly (*ἀκριβῶς*) that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” This then was plainly one of the things that had been taught to the Thessalonians; and the word *ἀκριβῶς* suggests accurate and systematic instruction in what seemed to the Apostle of great importance. In the second Epistle, in the passage concerning “the son of lawlessness,” who was to be revealed before the day of the Lord, occur these words: “Remember ye not that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?”

I hope to deal with this difficult passage in a later chapter. I may say here that I think it goes to shew that St Paul had acquainted his Thessalonian converts with the Lord's prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and of His *παρουσία*.

In conclusion we may remark in reference to the apostolic teaching in Thessalonica that both from the Acts and from the first Epistle we can see that there had been teaching given respecting “the Kingdom” (1 Thess. ii. 12) and that Jesus was set forth as

the King. This appears from the accusation brought against Paul and Silas before the politarchs (Acts xvii. 6, 7): "These that have turned the world (τὴν οἰκουμένην) upside down are come hither also ; whom Jason hath received: and these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus."

We have now extracted such information as we can from the Acts and the two Epistles respecting the teaching in life and doctrine given to the Thessalonians. The teaching seems to have made a deep impression. From Thessalonica, to use the words of the first Epistle, sounded forth (ἐξήχηται) the word of the Lord in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thess. i. 8). The Thessalonian converts became an ensample to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia (i. 7). They gave proof of the *φιλαδελφία* to all the brethren in all Macedonia (iv. 10).

But the Apostle's stay among his Thessalonian converts was abruptly terminated, not however, as we may gather from 1 Thess. v. 12, before he had ordained elders for the church. It is true that the narrative of the Acts says nothing of the appointment of elders in Thessalonica. But the writer of the book has already spoken of the appointment of such in the Galatian churches<sup>1</sup> (Acts xiv. 23). And we may

<sup>1</sup> I assume here the South Galatian theory which I have discussed in a previous essay.

reasonably conclude that wherever the Apostle established an ἐκκλησία some πρεσβύτεροι were ordained.

The preaching of the Kingdom and of Jesus as King, of which we have already spoken, was represented as revolutionary, and the people and politarchs seem to have thought it prudent to remove the cause of the disturbance. They therefore required that Paul and Silas should leave the city, security being taken from Jason and the rest, who were held responsible that they should not return. Paul and Silas then were sent away by the brethren by night to Berœa. Timothy is not mentioned as having gone with them, and it has been suggested that he remained at Thessalonica a while longer, and joined the others at Berœa. He was certainly at Berœa with Silas when Paul left for Athens (Acts xvii. 14).

It must be remembered that Paul and Silas were the leaders, Timothy was an attendant. Thus it was Paul and Silas who were imprisoned at Philippi, not Timothy. The Jews at Thessalonica who believed are said to have consorted with "Paul and Silas"; and it was Paul and Silas who were dismissed from the city. Nor could they return to it, whereas Timothy could and did (1 Thess. iii. 2).

From Thessalonica then Paul and Silas, and afterwards Timothy, passed to Berœa. The Jews of Berœa are described in the Acts as more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they received the word with all

readiness of mind. Many Jewish converts were made, and to these were added Greeks, men and women. We may observe incidentally that the position and influence of the women in all three Macedonian cities—Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea—as given in the Acts, is true to fact<sup>1</sup>.

But the Jews of Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up the multitudes. At once St Paul was sent off by the brethren to the sea, and with his faithful escort he came to Athens, Silas and Timothy staying still at Berea, for what reason we are not told. But we see from this that it was against St Paul personally that the hostility of the Jews was chiefly directed.

It is not clear from the Acts whether Silas and Timothy actually did join Paul at Athens as had been arranged. But the doubt is removed by a statement in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. At Athens St Paul was filled with some anxiety for his Thessalonian converts, anxiety which he may have felt all the more in consequence of the slight success of his preaching in Athens. He thought of his converts in Thessalonica and would have come again to them. But it is probable that Silas and Timothy brought him word that the prohibition of the politarchs was unrescinded. "Satan" hindered him and Silas from coming to revisit the Thessalonians (1 Thess. ii. 17, 18). Accordingly Paul and Silas decided that they would be left behind at Athens,

<sup>1</sup> Ramsay's *St Paul the Traveller*, p. 227.

while Timothy was sent to establish and comfort the Thessalonians concerning their faith (iii. 2). St Paul evidently felt great anxiety lest the afflictions they had to suffer should move them from their allegiance. "For verily, when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we are to suffer affliction; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause I also, when I could no longer forbear, sent that I might know your faith, lest by any means the tempter had tempted you, and our labour should be in vain" (iii. 4, 5).

The news that Timothy brought back was satisfactory and encouraging. "When Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you; for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (iii. 6—10). Then follows a prayer that "our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus may direct our way unto you." Still the Apostle hoped to come to them.

Timothy would not rejoin Paul and Silas at Athens but at Corinth, whence the first Epistle was



written. We are not told who was the bearer of the Epistle. It is not likely that it was Timothy, for he joins Paul and Silas in addressing the church of the Thessalonians in the Epistle. Indeed he seems to have remained in Corinth (2 Cor. i. 19).

It would seem from the Epistle that Timothy had brought back news of the death of one or more of the Thessalonian Christians, for whom the survivors had sorrowed more than was meet and right considering the Christian hope. The writers of the Epistle then in iv. 13—18 give words of comfort, likening death to sleep and reminding the Thessalonians of the hope of the resurrection, and of the *παρουσία* of the Lord. "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the *παρουσία* of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (iv. 15—18).

This leads St Paul on to speak of the need of readiness for the day of the Lord which was to come as a thief in the night; and practical exhortation is given by way of preparing for it.

The first Epistle was despatched from Corinth, and the messenger brought back answer. On the whole the state of the Thessalonian church was satisfactory, for the second Epistle speaks of their faith growing exceedingly; but there were certain irregularities.

Some of the Thessalonian Christians appear to have misinterpreted the words of the first Epistle respecting the day of the Lord. In view of its supposed nearness they were becoming distracted and negligent of their business. All this the second Epistle has to correct. As it will be necessary in these chapters to speak in some detail of this Epistle, I do not here enlarge on the subject. Enough has been said to shew the circumstances under which the two Epistles were written; and we have drawn a sketch of the church to which they were addressed.

But before passing on, as we must do in the next chapter, to treat of the genuineness of the Epistles, which in this present chapter we have taken for granted, it will not be out of place to draw attention to an apparent discrepancy between the Acts and the first Epistle. I refer to the movements of Silas and Timothy between Berœa and Corinth.

The narrative of the Acts makes it quite clear that St Paul intended the 'other two to join him at Athens (Acts xvii. 15, 16). It does not however state whether or not they did come to him there. We might suppose from the Acts that St Paul left Athens

before they came ; in which case he would leave instructions that they were to come to him at Corinth ; for we read in Acts xviii. 5 that they did join him at Corinth, and that it was from Macedonia that they came. But the first Epistle seems to imply that Timothy was sent *from Athens* back to Thessalonica (iii. 1, 2).

Further, when Timothy returned from Thessalonica to report on the state of the church there, he is said to have come *πρὸς ἡμᾶς* (1 Thess. iii. 6), these words implying that Silas was already with St Paul at Corinth, and yet, as stated above, it was both Silas and Timothy that came to him at Corinth from Macedonia according to the Acts.

These apparently conflicting statements of fact have been thought to tell against the genuineness of the first Epistle. Without entering here upon the general question of genuineness I think we may say that the statements are not after all irreconcilable.

For it is not unreasonable to suppose that Silas and Timothy did actually, according to the instructions received, join St Paul at Athens. We should I think have assumed from Acts xvii. 16 that this was the case had it not been for the statement of xviii. 5. This latter verse leaves the matter uncertain. What is left uncertain in the Acts must be decided by an appeal to the first Epistle to the Thessalonians. From that we must conclude that Silas and Timothy came to Athens before St Paul left it. From Athens

Timothy was sent back to report on the condition of the Thessalonian church. The plural used in 1 Thess. iii. 1 seems to imply that Silas remained with St Paul, that he was not sent away with Timothy. So then the mention of Silas in Acts xviii. 5 as coming to Corinth along with Timothy from Macedonia presents a difficulty. This might be solved by supposing that St Paul thought it well after Timothy had left for Thessalonica that Silas also should return to Macedonia—perhaps to visit the church of Berœa. For it must be remembered that while Silas was prohibited from going to Thessalonica, there was no reason why he should not go to Berœa. Silas then may have gone to Berœa as Timothy had gone to Thessalonica. Nor need they have returned from Macedonia together. Silas may have come back first and so have been with St Paul to receive Timothy. In this case the plural *ἡμᾶς* in 1 Thess. iii. 6 would be explained. But even if they did return from Macedonia to Corinth together the *ἡμᾶς* is not inexplicable. For Silas himself could not have gone to Thessalonica, and so must have got his news of the Thessalonian church from Timothy as much as St Paul did. Timothy may have joined Silas at Berœa and gone with him to Corinth.

We cannot of course come to any definite conclusion on this matter. I have said enough to shew that the Acts and the first Epistle do not in this matter present a necessary contradiction.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE GENUINENESS OF THE THESSALONIAN EPISTLES.

IT seemed desirable in the preceding chapter to abstain from controversy about the genuineness of our Epistles. Clearly if the Epistles are genuine they must form with the narrative of the Acts a consistent whole. Accordingly I endeavoured in the last chapter to set forth that consistency. In so doing I have really answered some of the objections which have been urged against the genuineness of the Epistles. For example, it has been said that the composition of the Thessalonian church as it is summarised in the Acts does not agree with what appears from each of the two Epistles. And it has been said too that the movements of Silas and Timothy as given in the Acts are not in accordance with what is implied about them in the first Epistle. The reader who has followed the reasoning of the last chapter will recognise that both these objections have received an answer by anticipation. There are however other difficulties which I have not as yet faced, and it will

be well now to enter in some detail upon the question of the Pauline authorship of the Epistles.

And the first thing we must do in this connection is to draw attention to the fact that it is generally recognised that the two Thessalonian Epistles are not independent. In spite of certain differences between them, differences which have seemed to some critics so serious as to be fatal to the traditional belief that *both* Epistles are Pauline, there are yet such marked resemblances between the two, that it is obvious that, if both letters are not genuine, the one has been constructed on the model of the other. If one is genuine and the other spurious, the spurious one has been modelled from the genuine one. If both are spurious, they are still not independent compositions. The first in point of time, whichever of the two it may prove to be, was used by the writer of the later Epistle.

About this there can be no question at all. Let us first place together the opening words of the two Epistles :

First Epistle. Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμόθεος  
τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ  
κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη.

Second Epistle. Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιμό-  
θεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ  
ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ  
εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ  
Χριστοῦ.

Now the general form of address here used is likewise to be found in the two Epistles to the Corinthians and in the Epistle to the Galatians. The later Epistles, namely, those of the first captivity and the pastoral Epistles, are not addressed to an ἐκκλησία as are these. But we must notice that while the *general* form of address in the Thessalonian Epistles is the same as that of the Corinthian and Galatian Epistles, the particular combination used in the Epistles to the Thessalonians differs from that of the other three Epistles. In the Epistles to the Corinthians it is "the church of God which is in Corinth" that is addressed; in the Epistle to the Galatians it is "the churches of Galatia"; but in the two Thessalonian Epistles it is "the church *of the Thessalonians*." This slight difference is remarkable, and even if there were no other similarities between the two Epistles, this alone would lead us to think that the two Epistles, on the hypothesis that one or the other or both are spurious, are not independent. The particular combination of Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus in each case and their greeting to "the church of the Thessalonians" are so striking that a casual reader would detect that, if we have not here two genuine letters written about the same time, one or other of the Epistles has been modelled by a pseudonymous writer on the pattern of the other. Both Epistles may, as Baur contended, be spurious; but if so the later is dependent on the earlier.

But the similarity between the two Epistles does not stop here. We may make further comparisons.

- 1 Thess. ii. 9. "Ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: working night and day, that we might not burden any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God."
- 2 Thess. iii. 8. "Neither did we eat bread for nought at any man's hand, but in labour and travail, working night and day, that we might not burden any of you."

It is not merely that these verses treat of the same subject; but whole phrases are the same in both. We have τὸν κόπον ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν μόχθον in the one, and ἐν κόπῳ καὶ μόχθῳ in the other. And in both we have the identical words νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ἐργαζόμενοι πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἐπιβαρῆσαι τινα ὑμῶν.

Again, we may compare:

- 1 Thess. iv. 11. "That ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you."
- 2 Thess. iii. 10—12. "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread."



Further in both Epistles we have thanksgiving to God for the faith and love of those to whom they were addressed (1 Thess. i. 3, 2 Thess. i. 3); in both alike is there mention of their persecutions and afflictions and of their patience in the endurance of them (1 Thess. i. 6, ii. 14, 2 Thess. i. 4). In both, as we have just seen, there are similar instructions in the fulfilment of the ordinary duties of life. And lastly in both there are passages treating of the day of the Lord and of the Parousia of Jesus Christ (1 Thess. iv. 15—18, v. 1—11, 2 Thess. ii. 1—12).

I do not now speak of the difference between the treatment in the two Epistles of these last two subjects, the Judgment and the Parousia. To that we shall come later. We must first observe how very closely the one Epistle resembles the other. The resemblance is so close that the subjects treated of in the two Epistles are the same, and the phraseology of the two is in some places the same. Anyone taking up the two letters and reading them through for the first time could not fail to notice the similarity between them, though he might at the same time detect a difference—some would say a discrepancy—between the two eschatological passages.

Now concerning this similarity Baur wrote as follows: "The two Epistles, as is shewn by similarity of their contents and by separate passages which shew that the one cannot have been written irrespective of the other, stand to one another in so close

a relation that whatever criticism decides about the one must determine our view of the other. For though besides the two possible cases, that both are alike genuine or both spurious, there is a further possibility, viz. that the one is genuine and the other spurious, nevertheless this can only be established by such a careful comparison of the two as will shew that the genuineness or spuriousness of the one results from the spuriousness or genuineness of the other<sup>1</sup>."

It does not seem to me that it is sound criticism to say, as Baur here practically does, that the two simplest explanations of the similarity of the two Epistles are that both are genuine or that both are spurious. I should be ready to allow that the simplest explanation of all is that both are genuine. But it seems to me *à priori* to be least likely of all that *both* are spurious. If both Epistles are not genuine, it

<sup>1</sup> *Theol. Jahrbücher*, XIV. 1855, p. 141 sq. *Die beiden Briefe an die Thessalonicher*. This essay is to be found translated at the end of Vol. II. of the English translation of Baur's *Paulus* by Menzies, published by Williams and Norgate. I have not however quoted from this translation. Baur's own words are, "Beide Briefe stehen durch die Verwandtschaft des Inhalts und durch einzelne Stellen, nach welchen der eine nicht ohne Berücksichtigung des andern geschrieben sein kann, in einer so nahen Beziehung zu einander, dass aus dem kritischen Urtheil über den einen sich auch das über den andern zu ergeben scheint. Denn wenn auch ausser den beiden Fällen, dass beide zusammen entweder ächt oder unächt sind, auch der Fall möglich ist, dass der eine ächt, der andere unächt ist, so kann doch auch dieses Resultat nur durch eine so genaue Vergleichung beider gewonnen werden, dass an der Aechtheit oder Unächtheit des einen, die Unächtheit oder Aechtheit des andern sich herausstellt."

would be a not unnatural explanation to give of their similarity of contents to say that one is genuine and the other modelled on it by some writer who sought in the name of the Apostle to give a different complexion to some point in the genuine Epistle. This last seems to me a perfectly reasonable and tenable position. But the last thing I should expect to find is that both Epistles are spurious, that a new pseudo-Paul used as his model the work of an earlier one.

The three possibilities in the order of what seems to me their *à priori* likelihood are (1) that both Epistles are genuine, (2) that one is genuine and the other spurious, (3) that both are spurious.

It may seem that in speaking of the *à priori* likelihood that both Epistles are genuine I am starting from a prejudice in favour of the Pauline authorship of the Epistles; but this is really not prejudice at all, for it arises from the fact that all the *external* evidence that can be brought to bear upon the subject is in favour of the genuineness of both Epistles. Presently I hope to produce this evidence. In using the term *à priori* then I am thinking of what is prior to internal evidence. It is sufficient now to say that no one ever questioned the Pauline authorship of either Epistle until the nineteenth century, when criticism attacked first the one and then the other on internal grounds.

We return to Baur's words in the judgment quoted

above. When we come to examine them it is not easy to attach to them a definite meaning. How, we ask, can it be possible by a careful comparison of the two Epistles to shew that the genuineness of the one results from the spuriousness of the other? I can see that a comparison of the two might enable us to see that the spuriousness of the one follows from the genuineness of the other. For we might by examining the two Epistles discover such a contradiction between them as would go to prove that they could not both be by the same author. In this case if one were genuine, the other could not be. But of course we could not by a mere comparison of the two decide which was the genuine Epistle.

Let us suppose for the purpose of argument that we have decided by a comparison of the one Epistle with the other that both cannot be genuine. The question now arises, Is one of the two Epistles genuine? If so, which of the two is it? If we could prove, by some process other than that of comparison of the one with the other, that one of them (say *A*) is genuine, then of course we should know that *B* is spurious. But if we could not establish the genuineness of one of them by an independent process, we might yet be able to prove the spuriousness of one, say *B*. We might, for example, discover in *B* some anachronisms, which would prove that it could not be Pauline. But what is known about *A* in consequence of this? Really nothing, unless we may

assume that not *both* Epistles are spurious. Of course if not both are spurious and *B* is, then *A* is genuine.

So then we see that the genuineness of *A* could not result by comparison from the spuriousness of *B*. Comparison of the two Epistles, the one with the other, cannot tell us more than whether they are in agreement or not. If they are in agreement both may be genuine but are not necessarily so. If there is a contradiction between them, both cannot be genuine, though one may be.

When once Baur has rejected as *à priori* unlikely that one Epistle is genuine and the other spurious, he has no right to speak of proving the genuineness of the one from the spuriousness of the other. I would grant that the genuineness of the one might be proved from the spuriousness of the other on the assumption that not both are spurious, but then it must be noticed that comparison of the two Epistles has nothing to do with this.

It is true that Baur's judgment in this matter has not met with the approval of many critics. For his objections to the genuineness of the second Epistle have satisfied more than have his objections to the Pauline authorship of the first. And there are several who readily accept the first Epistle and reject the second. It may then seem that we are but beating the air in criticising a judgment which has not been sustained by subsequent writers. Our criticism how-

ever may serve as the starting point for a definite plan of enquiry into the genuineness of our Epistles. It is most important in an investigation of this sort to state clearly what the plan is to be for the better avoidance of all circular reasoning.

We have four possibilities: (1) both Epistles are genuine, (2) both are spurious, (3) the first is genuine and the second spurious, (4) the second is genuine and the first spurious.

As no critic has ever, so far as I know, taken up the position indicated by (4) we may exclude this case, and consider only the first three possibilities. It will be seen that in regard to the three remaining possible cases the first Epistle is genuine in two of them and spurious in one, while the second Epistle is spurious in two and genuine in one. It will be best then to endeavour to establish the genuineness of the first Epistle before treating of the second. And in doing this references to the second Epistle will be inadmissible. Arguments derived from disagreements between the two Epistles are worth nothing until the genuineness of one of them is established. When this is done discrepancies between the two Epistles tell against the genuineness of the other. After shewing, as I hope to do in the next chapter, that the arguments which have been brought forward by Baur and others against the genuineness of the first Epistle are wholly insufficient to upset the traditional

view of the apostolic authorship of the Epistle, I shall in the fourth chapter pass to the objections made against the genuineness of the second Epistle. These objections will be found to be based partly on the contents of that Epistle considered without reference to the first Epistle, and partly on a comparison of its contents with those of the first Epistle. In other words, we shall have to deal with supposed anachronisms in the second Epistle and with supposed discrepancies between it and the first Epistle.

The next two chapters then will have to be devoted to an examination into objections to the genuineness of the Epistles based purely on internal evidence (that is on the contents of the Epistles themselves taken singly or together). But the genuineness of the Epistles would not be established by merely proving that the objections were not well founded. A very important point in the evidence for the apostolic authorship of the Epistles is that they are attested by some of the earliest Christian literature. It is my intention to devote the remainder of this chapter to a setting-forth of this witness of some of the earliest writers to the Pauline authorship of both Epistles. Against this external evidence those who dispute the genuineness of one or both Epistles have nothing of the same kind to set. Their objections are based purely on internal evidence. Such evidence then will have to be not only plausible but weighty to upset the traditional author-

ship. We are not dealing with newly discovered documents, but with documents known and recognised, and so far as we know never suspected in the early stages of Christian history.

There are two sentences which occur in the same section of Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians which cannot well be independent of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians. It is desirable to quote the whole section. I give here Bishop Lightfoot's translation and insert the Latin in a footnote. The original Greek of this section is unfortunately a matter of conjecture. The passage is as follows<sup>1</sup>:

"I was exceedingly grieved for Valens who aforetime was a presbyter among you, because he is so

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*, Part II. Vol. III. p. 475. The Latin text is given on p. 341 ff. "Nimis contristatus sum pro Valente, qui presbyter factus est aliquando apud vos, quod sic ignoret is locum qui datus est ei. Moneo itaque vos, ut abstineatis vos ab avaritia et sitis casti veraces. Abstinete vos ab omni malo. Qui autem non potest se in his gubernare, quomodo alii pronuntiat hoc? Si quis non se abstinerit ab avaritia, ab idololatria coinquinabitur, et tanquam inter gentes judicabitur, qui ignorant iudicium Domini. Aut nescimus, quia sancti mundum judicabunt? sicut Paulus docet. Ego autem nihil tale sensi in vobis vel audiavi, in quibus laboravit beatus Paulus, qui estis in principio epistolae ejus: de vobis etenim gloriatur in omnibus ecclesiis, quae solae tunc Dominum cognoverant; nos autem nondum cognoveramus. Valde ergo, fratres, contristor pro illo et pro conjuge ejus, quibus det Dominus poenitentiam veram. Sobrii ergo estote et vos in hoc; et non sicut inimicos tales existimetis, sed sicut passibilia membra et errantia eos revocate, ut omnium vestrum corpus salvetis. Hoc enim agentes, vos ipsos aedificatis."



ignorant of the office which was given unto him. I warn you therefore that ye refrain from covetousness, and that ye be pure and truthful. Refrain from all evil. But he who cannot govern himself in these things, how does he enjoin this upon another? If a man refrain not from covetousness, he shall be defiled by idolatry, and shall be judged as one of the Gentiles who know not the judgment of the Lord. Nay, know we not, that the saints shall judge the world, as Paul teacheth? But I have not found any such thing in you, neither have heard thereof, among whom the blessed Paul laboured, who were his letters in the beginning. For he boasteth of you in all those churches which alone at that time knew the Lord; for we knew Him not as yet. Therefore, brethren, I am exceedingly grieved for him and for his wife, unto whom may the Lord grant true repentance. Be ye therefore yourselves also sober herein, and hold not such as enemies, but restore them as frail and erring members, that ye may save the whole body of you. For so doing, ye do edify one another."

There cannot surely be much doubt that when Polycarp said, "Hold not such as enemies but restore them as frail and erring members" (*non sicut inimicos tales existimetis, sed sicut passibilia membra et errantia eos revocate*) he had in mind the words of 2 Thess. iii. 15 *καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἡγείσθε, ἀλλὰ νοουθετεῖτε ὡς ἀδελφόν*. Not only have we here in Polycarp's Epistle a reproduction of actual words from 2 Thess.

but also a commentary on its spirit. Polycarp enlarges on the words *καὶ μὴ ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἡγείσθε κ.τ.λ.* Wrong-doing must be discountenanced, and the offender deprived of the privileges of the sacred society. But those whose painful duty it is to excommunicate an offender are to remember that the punishment they inflict is not vindictive but corrective. While such offenders are cut off, the body suffers from the loss of them. They must not be accounted as enemies, but efforts must be made to restore them as frail and erring members that the whole body may be saved. Polycarp's words certainly reflect the spirit of 2 Thess. ii. 14, 15, "If any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." The same teaching respecting the use of excommunication is to be found in 2 Cor. ii. 5 ff.

Again, it has with good reason been thought that the words contained in the above section of Polycarp's Epistle, "For he (*sc.* Paul) boasteth of you in all those churches which alone at that time knew the Lord," &c. contain a reference to 2 Thess. i. 4—*ὥστε αὐτοὺς ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐνκαυχᾶσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπομονῆς ὑμῶν.* It will be well to look at this point somewhat closely to see whether the reference can be sustained, for there are some difficulties concerning it.

It certainly seems that the use of the present tense (*gloriatur* = *καυχᾶται*) in the words of Polycarp points to the preservation of the Apostle's boast in a written form. St Paul's boasting in some way remained, so that it could be said that he boasteth and not boasted.

But then arises the question: What is the connection of the words "in omnibus ecclesiis, &c." with the present "*gloriatur*"? We want to know whether what is meant is that the boast of the Apostle concerning the Philippians still remains in all the churches which at that time knew the Lord, or that the boast which had been made by St Paul about the Philippians in the churches which at that time knew the Lord still remains. In other words we seek to come at whether the words "in omnibus ecclesiis" find their meaning as the scene of the boast when made, or as the place of its preservation. And I think we must decide in favour of the former. For the latter would imply that, when Polycarp wrote, not only were there extant Epistles of St Paul addressed to all the separate churches of Macedonia and Achaia but that all such letters contained a reference to the Philippian church. But it is surely unlikely that Pauline Epistles which had survived to the time of Polycarp and were known to him should have failed to be preserved, and, even if they had, it is unlikely that a number of Epistles to different churches had a reference to the church at Philippi.

I think then that Polycarp's words must be taken to mean that St Paul had boasted of the Philippian church to the other churches and that the boast had been preserved.

And then it is to be noticed that the boast was made at a time before Asia was evangelised, for this is stated in the words "nos autem nondum cognoveramus." Strictly speaking we can only say that it was before *Smyrna*, whence Polycarp was writing, received the gospel. But there cannot be much doubt from Acts xix. 10 that Smyrna was evangelised from Ephesus during St Paul's long sojourn there during what is called the third missionary journey.

So then Polycarp's words speak of boasting by St Paul respecting the Philippian Christians before the third missionary journey, the fact of which boasting stood preserved.

Now it is perfectly clear from 2 Thess. i. 4 (supposing the Epistle to be genuine) that St Paul did boast to the other churches of Macedonia and to the churches of Achaia of the *Thessalonian* Christians, and this fact still stands written in the words—ὥστε αὐτοὺς ἡμᾶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐνκαυχᾶσθαι ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπομονῆς ὑμῶν. Further the boasting here spoken of was made before Asia was evangelised.

Can we then say that Polycarp was referring to the words of 2 Thess. i. 4 when he wrote, "For he boasteth of you in all those churches which alone at that time knew the Lord"? The difficulty of course

is that Polycarp's words were addressed to the Philippians and not to the Thessalonians, concerning whom in reality St Paul's boasting stood written. It might be said in answer to this that it is not unlikely that St Paul wrote at this time to the Philippians also, sending his letter by the same messenger, and that the contents of the letter might well be similar to those of the Thessalonian Epistle. It might be argued that it is hardly likely that all the letters St Paul wrote have been preserved. There may then have been a companion Epistle addressed to Philippi in which the Apostle spoke of the Philippians in terms similar to those used of the Thessalonians. And certainly it must be allowed that the extant Epistle to the Philippians (i. 3—5) shews that the Philippian church must from the first have been as great a cause for thankfulness to the Apostle as was that at Thessalonica.

But while I am ready to allow the unlikelihood of the preservation of all the Epistles St Paul ever wrote, I think it is hardly likely that an Epistle to the Philippians *known to Polycarp* should not have been ultimately preserved.

While then the hypothesis of a companion letter to Philippi would explain Polycarp's words and tell in favour of the genuineness of 2 Thessalonians, I do not think it is a fair one.

Let us now see whether the context of Polycarp's

words will help us at all. I purposely quoted the whole section above in order that its general purport might be quite clear. We see that Polycarp, on account of the case of the presbyter Valens, who seems to have disgraced his office through covetousness, warns the Philippians against this sin. Not that he considered it to be rife among them. On the contrary, their past record was a clean one. "I have not found any such thing in you, neither have heard thereof, among whom the blessed Paul laboured, who were his letters in the beginning. For he boasteth of you in all those churches which alone at that time knew the Lord ; for we knew Him not as yet."

The point of the passage then seems to be that the Christian past of Philippi had been longer than that of Smyrna, and that from the very first the conduct of the Philippian church had met with the Apostle's approval. From the very first the Philippian Christians were the Apostle's letters of recommendation (*epistulae*—compare 2 Cor. iii. 2, to which Polycarp seems to be here referring). From the first he had made his boast of them. And when we remember that our extant Epistle of St Paul to the Philippians was certainly known to Polycarp, and that that Epistle by itself makes it clear that the Philippian Church had from its first beginning (Phil. i. 5—*ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡμέρας ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν*) been a cause of great joy and thankfulness to the Apostle, we can pardon Polycarp if he draws a conclusion from St

Paul's boasting about the Thessalonians recorded in 2 Thess. i. 4, and says that the Apostle boasted of the Philippians in all the churches which at that time knew the Lord, and that the fact of his pride in the Philippian church was permanently preserved.

It seems to me then that the most natural explanation of Polycarp's words is that he has in mind the actual words of 2 Thessalonians and that he transfers their application to the Philippians concerning whom he knew from other sources that St Paul had cause from the very beginning of their faith to take exceptional pride in them. The words "in principio" (= ἐν ἀρχῇ) in the phrase "qui estis in principio epistulae ejus" recall the expression of the Apostle in Phil. iv. 15—ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. "Ye yourselves also know, ye Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only; for even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need." Polycarp in using the phrase represented by "qui estis<sup>1</sup> in prin-

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot considers that the present "estis" is probably to be explained by a present participle in the original, which he conjectures to have been τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐπιστολαῖς αὐτοῦ. This is certainly possible. But if it were not so, I think the present might be explained in the same way as the present "gloriatur." The sense would be: you were his 'letters of recommendation,' and this fact still remains attested in the Apostle's own words (preserved in our extant Epistle to the Philippians). Lightfoot's suggestion that some such word as 'laudati' may have slipped out and that "qui estis in principio epistulae ejus" should really be 'qui estis in principio epistulae ejus laudati' (=who were praised in the

cipio epistulae ejus" was transferring an expression used of the Corinthian church (2 Cor. iii. 2) to the church in Philippi. In like manner he takes an expression used about the church of the Thessalonians and applies it to the Philippians.

So then, to conclude this discussion, I take the sense of this part of the eleventh paragraph of Polycarp's Epistle to be somewhat as follows: Your past is one for which you may well be thankful. The blessed Apostle St Paul laboured among you in person. The result of his labour was that from the first you became his letters of recommendation. The pride he took in you stands permanently recorded in his Epistle to you. That pride he took in you from the very first (Phil. i. 3; iv. 15). That pride he must have given expression to in the churches of Macedonia and Achaia, just as he expressed his pride in the Thessalonians (2 Thess. i. 4). You were an approved Christian community before Asia had received the Gospel at all.

I have given at some length my reasons for thinking that the references to the 2nd Thessalonian Epistle which have been supposed to exist in Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians are really valid, because it seems to me extremely important not to be misled by superficial resemblances which may often be otherwise

beginning of his Epistle) certainly does not commend itself to me. For the Apostle's praise of the Philippians in the extant Epistle is not confined to the beginning of the Epistle.



explained. I think for the reasons I have given that Polycarp was certainly familiar with 2 Thessalonians, and that he regarded it as the work of St Paul.

On the other hand I must freely allow that of the three supposed references to 1 Thessalonians in the Ignatian Epistles two are extremely doubtful and the third is not quite certain. It is because of the doubt and uncertainty in this matter that I have taken the evidence of Polycarp in favour of 2 Thessalonians before considering that of Ignatius in favour of the first Epistle, though the Ignatian Epistles are in point of time prior to Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians.

I will now set forth the supposed quotations from 1 Thessalonians which are supposed to exist in Ignatius.

Ignatius, *Rom.* ii. οὐ θέλω γὰρ ὑμᾶς ἀνθρωπο-  
αρεσκῆσαι ἀλλὰ θεῷ ἀρέσαι ὥσπερ καὶ ἀρέσκετε.

This is supposed to have reference to

1 Thess. ii. 4. οὐχ ὡς ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκοντες  
ἀλλὰ θεῷ τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν.

It might however be said that Ignatius was thinking of the Epistle to the Galatians, where we have: ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώ-  
ποις ἀρέσκειν;

But it must be acknowledged that the words of Ignatius approximate nearer to 1 Thessalonians than

to Galatians, for the latter does not speak of *pleasing* God whereas the Thessalonian Epistle does. Moreover the words *ὥσπερ καὶ ἀρέσκετε* have a Thessalonian sound about them. Thus in 1 Thess. iv. 1 we have *καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε*. And it is interesting to notice that these words come just after the expression *ἀρέσκειν θεῷ*. We may compare also *καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε* in v. 11.

I feel tolerably sure in my own mind that Ignatius was in reality quoting from 1 Thessalonians. If it had to be decided whether it was 1 Thessalonians or Galatians that he had in mind I should say, for the reasons given just now, that it was certainly 1 Thessalonians, provided that there were no doubt about the genuineness of 1 Thessalonians on other grounds. But I frankly acknowledge that the quotation is not sufficiently sure to establish *by itself* Ignatius' recognition of the Epistle.

Next it has been thought that in the Epistle to the Philadelphians we have a reference to 1 Thess. ii. 9 or to 2 Thess. iii. 8. In chapter vi. Ignatius writes : *οὐκ ἔχει τις καυχήσασθαι οὔτε λάθρα οὔτε φανερώς, ὅτι ἐβάρησά τινα ἐν μικρῷ ἢ ἐν μεγάλῳ*. It is true that the notion contained in *ἐβάρησα* is found in the two verses mentioned, but then it is also found in 2 Cor. xi. 9 and xii. 16. I do not think then that this verse can be quoted as a proof of Ignatius' acquaintance with the Thessalonian Epistles.

Again, in Ignatius' Epistle to the Ephesians (chap. x.) we have: καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἄλλων δὲ ἀνθρώπων ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε. We compare with this 1 Thess. ii. 13, εὐχαριστοῦμεν τῷ θεῷ ἀδιαλείπτως, and 1 Thess. v. 17, ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε. If we were sure that we had the exact words of Ignatius here, there could not be much doubt that he was quoting 1 Thessalonians. But as the whole point of the reference turns on the word ἀδιαλείπτως which is not in the Syriac or Armenian we cannot be sure that it was originally in the Greek<sup>1</sup>.

The conclusion then to which our enquiry into the external evidence for the genuineness of the Thessalonian Epistles has led us so far is, that the second Epistle is certainly referred to and indeed quoted in Polycarp's Epistle, and that there are good reasons for supposing that Ignatius was referring to the first Epistle in Rom. ii.

It is satisfactory, I think, that the uncertainty attends the first Epistle rather than the second in the above evidence, because the second is that whose authorship has been the more questioned in recent times. It is doubtful whether any critic would continue to argue against the Apostolic authorship of the first Epistle, were he convinced of the genuineness of the second.

<sup>1</sup> See Lightfoot's *Apostolic Fathers*, *in loc.*

When we come to the time subsequent to that of the Apostolic Fathers the stream of evidence to attest the general belief in the Pauline authorship of both Epistles is steady and constant. Both Epistles are mentioned in the Muratorian Fragment and their Pauline authorship asserted. Justin Martyr refers to the eschatological passage of 2 Thess. ii. in *Trypho*, § 110. Irenæus quotes both Epistles and speaks of them as first and second respectively (*Hær.* v. 6 ; iii. 7). Tertullian likewise (*De Res. Carnis* 24). Clement of Alexandria quotes as apostolic<sup>1</sup> the words of 2 Thess. iii. 2 (*Strom.* v. 3), to say nothing of his references to the first Epistle.

But nowhere in early Christian literature is there the expression of any suspicion that either Epistle was not genuine. It has been left to the critics of modern times to discover from internal evidence arguments against the Pauline authorship of each Epistle. Whether or not these arguments are strong enough to upset the traditional authorship we shall endeavour to ascertain in the next two chapters.

<sup>1</sup> οὐκ ἐν πᾶσι, φησὶν ὁ ἀπόστολος, ἡ γνῶσις· προσεύχεσθε δὲ ἵνα ῥυσθῶμεν κ.τ.λ.

## CHAPTER III.

### OBJECTIONS TO THE GENUINENESS OF THE FIRST EPISTLE CONSIDERED.

THE genuineness of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians had been attacked in the first year of the nineteenth century by C. Schmidt, but Schrader seems to have been the first to question the genuineness of the first Epistle. In his work *Der Apostel Paulus*, published in 1836, he translates and analyses the various Epistles attributed to St Paul. And in his treatment of the Thessalonian Epistles—the first as well as the second—he brings forward phrases and passages which seem to him to be un-Pauline, and he discovers anachronisms and other incongruities in the Epistles which render their genuineness suspicious.

Baur in his *Paulus*, the first edition of which was not published until 1845, says (at the beginning of the chapter devoted to the Thessalonian Epistles) that while the second Epistle had already been attacked by criticism, the first had not yet excited any suspicions; and he attributes the absence of attack on the genuineness of the first Epistle to the

general insignificance of its contents. Baur's statement is, as we see, not in agreement with the facts, Schrader having publicly suggested nine years before that the Pauline authorship of 1 Thessalonians was suspicious.

Baur's own opposition to the first Epistle appears to have been due, in part at any rate, to his decision that the two Epistles must stand or fall together, and he was convinced of the spuriousness of the second Epistle by an examination of its eschatological section. It must be acknowledged however that he did not deliver the judgment which was quoted in the last chapter<sup>1</sup> until ten years after the publication of his *Paulus*. In any case it would be unfair to Baur to disguise the fact that he brought forward arguments against the Pauline authorship of the first Epistle which were based on its own contents, as distinguished from arguments based on a comparison of one of the two Epistles with the other.

I have already explained that I regard Baur's judgment that the two Epistles must necessarily stand or fall together as untenable. The two Epistles are undoubtedly not independent, but still the one may be genuine and the other not. We may therefore approach the first Epistle without any prejudice against it arising from objections to the genuineness of the second. Let us put aside the second Epistle altogether for this chapter and simply enquire whether

<sup>1</sup> Page 33.

the reasons which have been given for the rejection of the first Epistle are sufficient, such reasons being based on the Epistle itself or on a comparison of it with the Acts or with any Epistles attributed to St Paul, with the exception however of the second Thessalonian Epistle.

The points which have seemed to make the genuineness of the first Epistle suspicious may be conveniently classed under three heads, (1) The un-Pauline character of certain phrases and passages, (2) Incongruities in the Epistle itself, (3) Anachronisms which betray a later date.

We will now consider these three in order, beginning with the supposed un-Pauline character of phrases and passages. Commenting on 1 Thess. iii 13 Schrader remarks that it is strange that the name 'saints,' which elsewhere in St Paul is used for Christians, should here be used for the angels—"to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints (*μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ*)."

Had we had here *τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ* no difficulty might have been felt, but *τῶν ἁγίων* "ohne weiteres" (as Schrader remarks) arrests attention.

But is it certain that *μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ* means 'with all His angels'? It is quite true that it is a New Testament idea that when Christ comes He

will come with His angels (St Matt. xiii. 41, xxv. 31 ; St Mark viii. 38 ; St Luke ix. 26). And in two of these passages the epithet ἄγιοι is actually applied to the angels. But it may well be that, while the angels are intended by the writer of our Epistle to be included in πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ, this phrase is meant to take in also Christ's own Redeemed. The point of the passage is lost, I think, if we fail to connect in thought ἁγίων with ἁγιωσύνη which has gone before. Holiness (ἁγιωσύνη) here expresses a certain state of heart and mind which is essential to the Christian if he is to share in the Parousia of the Lord Jesus. They only can have part in that Parousia who are ἄγιοι<sup>1</sup>.

Then Schrader objects to θεοδίδακτος in iv. 9, remarking that it is nowhere else to be found in St Paul ; but that does not prove anything, particularly as the word is borrowed from the Septuagint of Isaiah liv. 13. The use of the word in 1 Thess. need not imply, as Schrader suggests, that no instruction or admonition had been given to the Thessalonians on φιλαδελφία.

Next exception is taken to the eschatological views of iv. 16, 17. The general 'Himmelfahrt' of all Christians is thought to be un-Pauline. The idea of the 'Himmelfahrt'—the being caught up into the

<sup>1</sup> See Lightfoot's note on the verse in *Notes on Epistles of St Paul*.



air—is said to belong to a later time, when attempts were made to transfer the kingdom of God from earth to heaven. This idea is thought to be alien to St Paul's teaching and especially at this early date, when the Kingdom of God was conceived of as to be manifested on earth. But surely there is no real justification for this contention. In 1 Cor. xv. St Paul says without possibility of being misunderstood that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" and that those who are in the flesh when Christ comes must be changed. "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The very change here spoken of seems to suggest the transference to some scene other than that of earth. I can find no evidence in St Paul's Epistles that he expected the scene of the consummation of the Kingdom to be on earth.

In his note on 1 Thess. iv. 17 Schrader complains that there is the absence of any mention of the change which the living are to experience at the coming of Christ. The eschatology of 1 Thessalonians is thought to be not sufficiently spiritual. According to St Paul's teaching elsewhere man is to be changed, the earthly personality is to cease and a spiritual personality to take its place. But this seems

hardly consistent with the contention that St Paul regarded the scene of the kingdom of God as on earth. It is quite true that 1 Thess. iv. 17 does not speak explicitly of a change which is to take place in those who are alive at the coming of Christ as does 1 Cor. xv. 51, but it would appear that a change is implied in the being caught up into the air.

I cannot then see that there is any contradiction between the eschatological views of 1 Thessalonians and those of 1 Corinthians.

In chapter v. of the Epistle Schrader finds four passages which are un-Pauline. The use of the spiritual weapons mentioned in v. 8 is not according to St Paul, who elsewhere speaks of such equipments to fight against evil in order to overcome it. In v. 10 the death of Christ is spoken of in a way which is not according to what St Paul elsewhere says. In verse 19 while there is a reference to spiritual gifts too little is said about them. If the Epistle were really by St Paul he would enlarge on the use and value of such gifts as elsewhere, and not merely say "Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesyings." The tripartite division of man in v. 23 is said to be un-Pauline, and so are the words *όλοτελείς, όλόκληρον*.

I must confess that none of these last objections seem to me of any real weight, and it does not seem worth while to discuss them at any length. A sufficient answer to those who complain of the un-Pauline

character of the Epistle is that it does not differ more from the Galatian and Corinthian Epistles than do these from the Epistle to the Philippians.

We come next to the objections under the second head—incongruities in the Epistle itself. The admonition in 1 Thess. iv. 3—*ἀπέχεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῆς πορνείας*—is thought not to be in keeping with the praise bestowed on the Thessalonian Christians at the beginning of the Epistle, where they are said to be “an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia.” But, as I have already said, this admonition to the Thessalonians was not given because of any obvious falling short on their part, as the words of iv. 1 (*καθὼς καὶ περιπατεῖτε*) shew, but because the Apostle felt the extreme importance of insisting on this point at this early stage of their Christian career.

A rather more serious objection is made against the concluding verses of the Epistle. Schrader asks what is the point of *τοὺς ἀδελφούς πάντας* in the exhortation “Salute all the brethren with a holy kiss.” Seeing that the Epistle was addressed to the whole church of the Thessalonians, *ἀλλήλους*<sup>1</sup> would have been more appropriate than *πάντας τοὺς ἀδελφούς*. Exception is also taken on the same ground to the charge, “I adjure you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the brethren.”

<sup>1</sup> As in Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12.

An obvious answer to this objection is that verses 26 and 27 are a postscript intended for the Elders, to whom the Epistle would naturally first be given. It can hardly be intended that the Epistle should be sent on to other churches. As Lightfoot remarks, this is excluded by the phrase *ἐν φιλήματι ἀγίῳ*, which implies personal intercourse. It is an argument in favour of understanding these verses to be a postscript that the expression *τὴν ἐπιστολὴν* is used, not *τὴνδε τὴν ἐπιστολὴν*, which we should have if the words were a part of the Epistle itself<sup>1</sup>.

It has been suggested by other critics that the words "I adjure you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the brethren" seem to belong to a time when a greater importance would be attached to apostolic letters than could be the case at this early stage in the Apostle's missionary career. The pseudonymous writer seeks to emphasize the great importance of the letter he has written. But in answer to this it may be said that it is remarkable that the Apostle speaks less in his own name in 1 Thessalonians than in any other Epistle (unless we except 2 Thess.). The plural 'we' is kept up throughout almost the whole Epistle. A later writer seeking to give apostolic sanction to what he had to say would hardly have written so.

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Lightfoot's note on v. 27.

We come then to the other anachronisms which Schrader detected in the first Epistle. After criticising the expression τῶν ἀγίων αὐτοῦ in iii. 13 he says that it is possible that the letter was not written until after the destruction of Jerusalem, and if so the words of ii. 16—ἐφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος—would be explained. But let it only be borne in mind that St Paul must have been familiar with Christ's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, and we have a perfectly reasonable explanation of these words<sup>1</sup>. The word of doom had already gone forth against the apostate chosen people. Their very opposition to the Gospel was a part of their punishment. They could not believe. Their inability to believe was an evidence of the ὀργή. We may compare St Paul's words in the Epistle to the Romans (xi. 8): "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this very day."

It is surely possible then for one who knew the word of doom uttered by Christ against the Jewish nation to say: "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

Again, I cannot feel the force of Schrader's objection to iv. 6 made on the ground that the warning is only given against defrauding the *Christian*. Schrader suggests that the words belong to a later time when

<sup>1</sup> Note in particular the words of St Luke xxi. 23.

there was no dealing between heathen and Christians. But surely it would be necessary in order to arrive at this stage to come to a time later than any that could possibly be assigned for the composition of the Epistle even on the hypothesis of its spuriousness.

Lastly Schrader objects to the words of 1 Thess. iv. 10, "Indeed ye do it (*sc.* *φιλαδελφίαν*) toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia" on the ground that this was impossible only a few weeks (*nach den ersten Wochen*) after their conversion, and that the Christians in Philippi and Berea could hardly be spoken of as "all the brethren which are in all Macedonia."

This same objection was strongly urged by Baur, who argued that the picture of the Thessalonian church given in this Epistle is not that of a young and newly founded society. For the Epistle, if genuine, must have been written not very long (Schrader's words "*nach den ersten Wochen*" are however an exaggeration) after the preaching of the Gospel in Thessalonica.

"How," asked Baur, "can it be said of Christians belonging to a church only lately founded that they have become patterns to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia, that the fame of their reception of the word of the Lord has spread abroad not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also their faith *ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἐξελέγηλθεν*, that people of every place are

speaking of them, how they have been converted and turned from the idols to God (i. 7 f.)? How can the Apostle say after so short a time that he has a most ardent desire to see them face to face? How can he say that he wished not merely once but twice to come to them?...How can the brotherly love of the Thessalonians, which they exhibit to all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia, be talked about as a virtue already so widely proved? Were admonitions to a quiet and industrious life, such as are given in iv. 11, 12, necessary even at that early period<sup>1</sup>?"

Now in reference to the statement made on i. 8, we must bear in mind that, on the hypothesis that the Epistle is genuine, it was not written for some *months* after St Paul had left Thessalonica. He had been at Berea; leaving Silas and Timothy there, he had gone with an escort of brethren to Athens. There he waited for Silas and Timothy, and had time to preach both in the synagogue and in the market before they came. Then Silas and Timothy joined him, bringing news we may suppose of the persistent hostility of the Jews in stirring up persecution against the Christians. We may suppose that Silas and Timothy brought news from Thessalonica as well as from Berea. The news was disquieting to St Paul. He felt anxious about the welfare of these new converts. Hearing that it was still impossible for him to

<sup>1</sup> Baur's *Paulus*, Part II. Chap. vii.

return to them, he sent Timothy, to whom entrance into the city had not been forbidden. Timothy accordingly visited Thessalonica and possibly Philippi also. Silas too, as I have suggested in the first chapter, seems also to have gone to Macedonia, possibly to Berea, for he was, it would seem, forbidden entrance into Thessalonica.

It must then be borne in mind that, if the first Epistle be genuine, it was not written until after Timothy had been sent from Athens to Macedonia and had rejoined St Paul at Corinth. The report which Timothy brought back had satisfied St Paul that their labour had not been in vain. "When Timothy came even now unto us from you, and brought us glad tidings of your faith and love, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, longing to see us, even as we also to see you; for this cause, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our distress and affliction through your faith: for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (iii. 6—10).

And it must be remembered that the great success the Apostle's preaching had met with among the Greek population at Thessalonica must have been much talked of in the province generally. The Jews



had complained to the politarchs of Thessalonica that the men who had 'turned the world upside down' had found their way to them ; and the opposition of the Jews and the factions they caused among the Gentile population must have been sufficiently serious to cause the preaching of the Gospel to be much talked about. It is perfectly intelligible that tidings of the spread of the new religion had found its way into many parts of Macedonia and Achaia.

But then it may be said that if it be granted that the news of the Thessalonian reception of the Gospel might have got abroad and spread through Macedonia and Achaia, there is still a difficulty in the words *ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ*. If the Epistle is genuine St Paul speaks of the faith of the Thessalonians having gone forth "in every place."

The Greek of i. 8 runs as follows :

*ἀφ' ὑμῶν γὰρ ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ Ἀχαΐᾳ, ἀλλ' ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν ἢ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐξελέλυθεν, ὥστε μὴ χρεΐαν ἔχειν ἡμᾶς λαλεῖν τι.*

We observe that the sentences are not strictly grammatical. It would have been according to grammar and logic to say, "For from you has sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia but in every place," this being closed by a full-stop. But this is not what we have

here, but "For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth." It is not then perfectly clear from the structure of, and connection between, these sentences whether ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ is intended as something additional to ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ Ἀχαΐᾳ, or whether these two expressions are intended to cover the same ground. The γὰρ of verse 8 connects the verse with the preceding one, which runs, "so that ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." The γὰρ suggests that verse 8 is in explanation of this; but the words "for from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord" seem hardly by themselves to suggest in what way or why the Thessalonians had become an *ensample*, whereas the words "in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth" do. Verses 7 and 8 then would form a logical whole if they ran thus: "Ye became an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith to God-ward is everywhere gone forth." It will be seen that if this were the meaning of the verses ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ would express the same as ἐν τῇ Μακεδονίᾳ καὶ Ἀχαΐᾳ. It must be acknowledged however that the position of οὐ μόνον in the first sentence of verse 8 makes this interpretation of the passage grammatically impossible. So then we have to ac-

knowledge that ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ seems to mean more than 'everywhere in Macedonia and Achaia.'

But then as the passage is not strictly logical it is surely unreasonable to press the meaning of παντὶ too literally. At Corinth St Paul must have been brought into contact with people coming from various parts, even from Rome itself (Acts xviii. 2), and from them he may have discovered that the events at Thessalonica were talked about. And we must not omit to notice the close connection with ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ of the words "so that we need not speak anything." Those ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ who heard of the faith of the Thessalonians were those who came into contact with St Paul. Seeing that Thessalonica was on the *Via Egnatia*, the great highway between the East and Rome, there is nothing impossible in the suggestion that Priscilla and Aquila had themselves heard of the Thessalonian church before leaving Italy.

*It must ever be borne in mind that a letter has to be interpreted, not by what it says absolutely, but by what the words would reasonably mean for those to whom they were addressed.*

Next we come to the statement of iv. 9 that the Thessalonian Christians were practising φιλαδελφία to all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia. I cannot see that it can be said with fairness that this stamps the Epistle as not genuine, for we do not

know what particular opportunities for "love of the brethren" had been afforded the Thessalonians even at this early stage. Clearly the Apostle had made a point of insisting on this. He was anxious that the Christians should recognise their obligations one to another as brethren, as members of one society. We know how later on he organised a great act of *φιλαδέλφια* from the Gentile to the Jewish Christian churches<sup>1</sup>. We remember too how his ministry to the Gentiles had been preceded by a similar act (Acts xi. 30). From the first, then, St Paul seems to have recognised the need for an interchange of *φιλαδέλφια* between the different Christian communities. In the First Epistle to the Thessalonians we see how the Thessalonian converts are made to feel that they are not only a community by themselves; their faith has a wider influence (i. 8); by love of the brethren outside their own city they can realise their oneness with other Christians. And we may detect even in the words of 1 Thess. ii. 14, which speak of persecution, a desire on the Apostle's part for the realisation of this oneness. The persecutions which the Thessalonians had to undergo made them one with the churches of God which were in Judaea in Christ Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> On the 'Collection for the Saints' carried out on the third missionary journey, and its importance as setting forth the unity of the Church, see Hort's *Romans and Ephesians*, pp. 39 ff.

Again, when Baur asks, "Were admonitions to a quiet and industrious life such as are given in iv. 11, 12 necessary even at that early period?" I reply that I cannot at all see why such admonitions should not seem perfectly appropriate. Many of the converts might well be disturbed by their expectations of the Parousia about which St Paul had taught them (1 Thess. v. 2 ff.). Moreover it is not impossible that some of the converts found it convenient to live on the charity of their brethren, for we note the connection of these admonitions, to which Baur took exception, with the exhortation on *φιλαδελφία* (iv. 9—12).

Another objection, coming under the head of anachronisms, which has been made to the genuineness of the first Epistle is that it is impossible that so short a time after the evangelisation of Thessalonica the question of the relation of the dead to the expected Parousia should have arisen (1 Thess. iv. 13 ff.). But this objection cannot be accounted of serious weight, for surely some of the members of the Christian community might have died in the months that had elapsed since St Paul left the city. Indeed it would be enough to raise the question, if only one had died.

We may now leave the objections to the Epistle on the ground of its anachronisms, which we have

seen to be after all not very serious, and turn to the objection based on the fact that it is lacking in doctrine, and generally wanting in point. Now if the Epistle is lacking in doctrinal matter it is surely less likely than ever that it is spurious, for all motive for writing in the name of the Apostle is gone. If it be said that it was written in the interests of the eschatological views expressed in the Epistle, then recognition is given of the fact that the Epistle is not wholly wanting in doctrinal matter.

But it is not to be denied that the Epistle is for the most part personal rather than doctrinal. And it is this very fact, that the Epistle is personal, which stamps it as genuine. Surely when the Apostle had been cut off from personal intercourse with this large newly established church at Thessalonica, and knew the trials and afflictions to which the Christians were exposed, it was only natural that he should write to them, and that the letter should betray his feelings partly of anxiety and partly of hopefulness and thankfulness. To say, as Baur did, that so much of the Epistle consists of nothing but what the Thessalonians knew already is not to prove it spurious. The Apostle would repeat some of his instructions but without shewing any distrust of his converts. He would have them know his love and care for them, and these are apparent in almost every line of the Epistle, which seems to me to be a perfectly natural production and its contents only to be

explained when we remember the circumstances in which the Apostle was placed. It was a critical time, this first preaching of the Gospel in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia. Galatia was so far the only province St Paul had evangelised. Asia had been refused to him by the guidance of the Spirit which led him onwards to Macedonia (Acts xvi. 6), from Macedonia he had been driven by persecution. What was to be the fruit of his interrupted labour? The first Epistle shews that the Apostle was, if anxious, yet hopeful in regard to this.

Baur objected to the language of the Epistle respecting the Jews as un-Pauline, arguing that in none of the Pauline Epistles is it opposition from Jews but from Judaising Christians of which the Apostle could complain. But if we accept the narrative of the Acts as authentic, it is perfectly clear that the opposition of the Jews was just now very serious. It was their jealousy which had moved the rabble of Thessalonica to make an uproar and to assault the house of Jason. This disturbance had made it necessary for the politarchs to expel Paul and Silas from the city. To Berea the Jews had followed them, "stirring up and troubling the multitudes." This disturbance had made it desirable that St Paul should leave Macedonia and go on to Athens. There he seems to have met with little success. When he went to Corinth, the Jews here also opposed them-

selves and blasphemed. And in the narrative of the Acts (xviii. 6 ff.) this opposition is seen to follow very shortly on the return of Timothy from Macedonia. Can we wonder then at the indictment brought against the Jews in the Thessalonian Epistle that they "both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins alway: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."

The Thessalonian Epistle and the Acts alike shew that it was becoming clear to St Paul how hopeless was the state of the Jews. We may compare his words recorded in Acts xviii. 6, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles," with the words of the Epistle, "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." What is said in the Thessalonian Epistle about the opposition of Jews, as distinguished from Judaising Christians, is explained quite naturally by the experience the Apostle had already undergone in Macedonia, to say nothing of earlier experiences of the same kind in Galatia (Acts xiii. 45), and by the opposition he was just then meeting with at Corinth at the very time the Epistle was written. It would seem to have been the news brought by Timothy which impelled the Apostle to speak plainly to the Jews of Corinth and to turn from them decisively if they would not hear.



It will have been noticed that the objections to the genuineness of the first Epistle which have been examined in this chapter are chiefly those put forward by Schrader and Baur before the middle of the last century. These two are the leaders of the attack, and to what they have urged against the Epistle subsequent writers appear to have added little that is new. It is refreshing to come upon a new argument, as for example one does in the case of Steck's article in the *Jahrbuch für protestantische Theologie* for 1883. There Steck repeats many of Baur's objections but adds to them a further point of his own. He maintains that 1 Thessalonians betrays its late date by its reference to 2 Esdras. Setting out from the words of 1 Thess. iv. 15 "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord, &c." he endeavoured to find this Herrenwort and thought that he had discovered it in 2 Esdras. But the references he gives are quite unconvincing.

Holsten's note in the same periodical for 1877 will be found quoted below<sup>1</sup>. It is unnecessary to discuss it here.

<sup>1</sup> He writes: "Nun lässt sich, abgesehen von einer durchgeführten Begründung, die Unächtheit des ersten Briefes an die Thess. an einem einzigen Verse nachweisen. Vergleicht man nämlich Apoc. 2, 2 und 1 Cor. 13, 13 mit 1 Thess. 1, 3, so wird man dem Schlusse nicht ausweichen können, dass der Pauliner, der den ersten Thessalonicherbrief verfasste und drei Grundbegriffe des Paulus mit drei Ausdrucksformen des Judenchristen in so einziger Weise zusammenschweisste, den Brief des Apocalyphtikers an die Gemeinde von Ephesus vor Augen

The majority of critics both German and English now accept the genuineness of the first Epistle. In this chapter I have omitted no argument against it which seemed to me deserving of consideration, and I confess that a careful examination of all these points, the result of which I have only been able to give briefly in this chapter, has made the genuineness of the Epistle doubly sure to my own mind. If the Epistle be spurious, some motive has to be found for its composition; and this is just what is wanting. It would be absurd for a writer personating St Paul to make it seem after the Apostle's death that he expected to be alive at the Parousia of the Lord. But this is clearly implied in iv. 17. The only part of the Epistle which could be suggested as giving the motive of the whole, on the hypothesis of its spuriousness, is the eschatological section, but there is nothing in this sufficiently original, nothing differing from St Paul's views elsewhere expressed, except it be the 'Himmelfahrt' to which Schrader objected.

Suppose for a moment that the 'Himmelfahrt' is meant to be the chief idea of the Epistle; let us ask whether the Epistle is so composed as to suggest that it is meant to be so. What is the point of all the earlier part of the Epistle with its deep personal

oder in Gedächtniss hatte. Man beachte dabei, dass gerade diese Worte des Apocalyptikers an die paulinische Gemeinde zu Ephesus jedem Pauliner der damaligen Zeit sehr peinlich, desshalb aber auch sehr bekannt sein mussten."

earnestness and desire for the welfare of the Thessalonian church? This question seems to me unanswerable if the Epistle be not genuine.

The ~~personal element~~ which enters so largely into the Epistle is the strongest corroboration of the external evidence which witnesses to the genuineness of the Epistle. No writer who was concerned with establishing a doctrine and giving to it apostolic authority would have been capable at that time of writing the first three and a half chapters of the Epistle. Psychologically that would have been an impossibility.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE GENUINENESS OF THE SECOND EPISTLE.

THE real stumblingblock, with not a few critics, to the acceptance of the genuineness of the second Epistle is its so-called apocalyptic section contained in the second chapter. The eschatological views there expressed are thought to be un-Pauline, and the passage has seemed to some to be incapable of explanation except as the work of some writer at a time subsequent to the death of St Paul.

Now I think it must be acknowledged that whether the Epistle be genuine or not, its real purpose is to be found in this very section to which exception is taken. In the last chapter it was argued that no motive could be assigned sufficient to account for the first Epistle if it be not genuine. But the same cannot be said in regard to the second Epistle. The eschatological passage may contain views which were not those of St Paul, but which a later writer desired to commend to his contemporaries by giving to them apostolic sanction. He may have incorporated them

in the form of an Epistle purporting to have been written by the Apostle himself. I do not myself think that this is so, but the hypothesis is not an unreasonable one in itself. It is at any rate deserving of respectful consideration. It is not unnatural that critics, who have failed to find an interpretation of this difficult passage by regarding it as the work of St Paul, should have sought to interpret it in some other way.

In considering the genuineness of the first Epistle we abstained from all reference to the second. In the present chapter however we must admit arguments for or against the genuineness of the second Epistle which depend on a comparison of the one Epistle with the other. In other words, I shall henceforth use the first Epistle as genuinely Pauline, having shewn in the preceding chapter that the arguments alleged against the traditional authorship are quite insufficient to upset it.

By conceding the genuineness of the first Epistle we at once furnish those who oppose the genuineness of the second with a weapon of attack, for it is argued that, similar as the two Epistles are in style and diction, they are in direct contradiction one to the other as regards their eschatological teaching. In reference to this point Dr Davidson writes as follows :

“ The prominent and peculiar paragraph in chapter

ii. 1—12 contains un-Pauline ideas and cannot be harmonised with the first letter, which says that the second advent will be sudden and unexpected. The writer himself believes that he shall live to see it: 'We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent, &c.' (1 Ep. iv. 13); a belief corrected in the second Epistle, where the Thessalonian converts are told that the event is not imminent, because it will be preceded both by an apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin. Things are interposed between the readers and the second advent to allay their excited feelings and bring them back to the ordinary duties of life. The first Epistle describes the time of the coming as uncertain, and without signs betokening its nearness. The second contains definite preluding signs. The first asserts the Apostle's belief that he should see it himself; the second removes that belief to a distance. Whence this change within a short time? The progress of events could not have caused it. Paul expressed the expectation of witnessing the second advent in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (xv. 51). Did he write in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians that he should be alive at the coming of the Lord; correct that belief soon after in the second Epistle, and revert to his original idea in addressing the Corinthians? The inconsistency cannot be explained by the fact that the writer's mind was subject to change, particularly on such a subject as the second

advent; because this Epistle, if authentic, was but little behind the former in point of time. Such sudden change cannot be attributed to him; especially as he afterwards enunciated his first opinion. We admit development in the mind of the Apostle. But the subject of the second advent, though not of primary importance, was too momentous to be tossed about in thought from immediateness to remoteness of occurrence. Though nothing certain was known about it, its nearness supplied comfort to the spirits of Paul and the first Christians which could not have been easily relinquished. The expectation of surviving such an event must have been cherished by the ardent Apostle of the Gentiles. The author also reminds his hearers (*sic*) that he had told them before of the preparatory phenomena; so that both his oral teaching and written words (ii. 1—12) clash with the statement of the first Epistle<sup>1</sup>."

I have quoted this passage at length because it

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the New Test.*, 3rd ed., Vol. I. p. 253. It is unnecessary to dwell on Dr Davidson's change of views on the genuineness of 2 Thess. between his first and later editions.

Very similar views are expressed by German writers who oppose the genuineness of 2 Thess. See for example Pfeiderer in his work *Das Urchristenthum* (Berlin 1887) p. 77. Quite recently Holtzmann (see *Zeitschrift für die neutest. Wissenschaft.* May 1901) has said: "Ich bin nun zwar nach wie vor der Ansicht, dass beide Zukunftsbilder sich ausschliessen und wer den Thessalonichern nach 1. 5. 2, 3 das Eintreten des 'Tages' als Sache des unberechenbaren Momentes dargestellt hat, nicht gleichzeitig auch eine Lehre unter ihnen geführt haben kann, wie sie 11. 2. 5 vorausgesetzt wird."

sets forth clearly the opinions of one who while accepting the genuineness of the first Epistle denies that of the second. It will be seen that the objections here urged against the Pauline authorship of the second Epistle are that the passage ii. 1—12 is un-Pauline in character, and that it is inconsistent with the first Epistle.

Let us for the present lay aside the objection that the eschatological section is un-Pauline. First it will be well to enquire whether the difference between the two Epistles is all that Dr Davidson has represented it to be. He says that the writer of the first Epistle believed that he would be alive at the second advent, but this belief is corrected in the second.

But I venture to say that it is an entire mistake to suppose, as several critics have done, that 2 Thessalonians differs from the earlier Epistle, in representing the writer as not expecting to be alive at the second advent. He speaks of the "Parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ and *our* gathering together unto Him (*ἡμῶν ἐπισυναγωγῆς ἐπ' αὐτόν*)." We may compare the use of this word *ἐπισυναγωγῆ* with that of *ἐπισυνάξουσιν* in the words of Christ as recorded by St Matthew (xxiv. 31)<sup>1</sup>: "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." It would seem

<sup>1</sup> Compare also St Mark xiii. 27.



then that it is the gathering together of *the living* that is referred to in the words of the Epistle. And the writer by using the first personal pronoun *ἡμῶν* includes himself in their number. This is perfectly intelligible if St Paul be the author of the Epistle. For Dr Davidson is certainly right in contending that 1 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians indisputably shew that the Apostle expected to be alive at the second advent. If then 2 Thessalonians made it appear that he expected not to be alive, there would be a serious inconsistency. As it is, that inconsistency exists only in the imagination of those who have already decided that 2 Thessalonians is not by St Paul because of the un-Pauline character of its eschatological section generally.

Again, Dr Davidson contends that as the author of the second Epistle reminds those to whom he is writing that he had told them before of the preparatory phenomena, therefore oral teaching and written words appear to clash with the statement of the first Epistle. But here again I think there is a serious mistake. Where does the first Epistle say or imply that there were to be no premonitory signs of the day of the Lord? It is true that the Apostle says that the day is to come as a thief in the night, but what, we may ask, did the Apostle mean when he said: "But concerning the times and seasons ye have no need that aught be written unto you"? I

take it that these words imply that careful instruction had been given to the Thessalonians respecting "the times and the seasons," which may have included just such teaching as is implied in 2 Thess. ii.

Nor again is it consistent with the expressions of the second Epistle to say as some have done that it puts the second advent at a distance. It is true that it says that the day is not imminent, not immediate, but that it may yet not be far off seems to be suggested by the words of verse 7—*τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας*. These words imply surely that the premonitory signs are beginning to appear, though they have not yet attained their fulness. There is need then for careful watching, but none for a scare and neglect of daily duty. If in the first Epistle the Apostle inculcates watchfulness, he does not in the second say that there is no need for this. But he appears to be correcting a false alarm which the words of his earlier letter had, without any such intention on his part, caused in the Thessalonian church.

There does not appear to me then to be any contradiction between what is said about the Parousia in the two Thessalonian Epistles, though the eschatological passages of the two Epistles present a different aspect. In the first Epistle the exhortation is to watch, because otherwise the day of the Lord will come upon you unexpectedly as a thief in the night.

In the second Epistle the same exhortation to watch still holds good though it is not actually given. The actual exhortation given comes to this: Do not be so disturbed about what is coming as to give up the regular routine of your work. Time is needed for the fulfilment of the signs which are to precede the Parousia. Such signs are already appearing—for this is implied, as I have already said, in *ἡδὴ ἐνεργεῖται*—so that it is necessary to be on the watch.

We can hardly doubt that when in the first Epistle the Apostle wrote, “Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night,” he had in mind the words of Christ which have been preserved for us in the synoptists. Thus in St Matthew xxiv. 36—43 we read, “But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming (*παρουσία*) of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man.....Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken

through. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh<sup>1</sup>."

We may well suppose that some such teaching as this had been given to the Thessalonian Christians by Paul and Silas when they were with them.

And we may remark that there is no more contradiction between the eschatological sections of the two Thessalonian Epistles than there is between the two different parts of our Lord's recorded discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and the signs of His Parousia.

Thus far then, without yet going into the question of the interpretation of the signs preceding the Parousia in the eschatological section of 2 Thessalonians, we are able to say that there is no such contradiction between this section and 1 Thessalonians v. 1—3 as justifies the conclusion that the two Epistles cannot be by the same author. In both Epistles it is implied that the Apostle expects to be alive at the Parousia. The second Epistle does not say that watching is not necessary, but rather implies that it is, but such watching is to be intelligent, not the watching of unsteady excitement. When in the first Epistle it is said that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night, it is not to be inferred that it is immediately to appear, but only that it will surprise those who do not look for it. When in the second Epistle the

<sup>1</sup> Compare St Mark xiii. 32—37; St Luke xxi. 34—36.

Thessalonians are told that they are deceived if they credit those who say that the day is imminent (ἐνέστηκεν), they need not understand by this that such a statement as that it will come as a thief in the night is untrue. The writer of the second Epistle does not by what he says discredit the first.

But while it may be acknowledged that the eschatological teaching of the second Epistle is not out of agreement with that of the first, there yet remains the fact that in spite of resemblances between the two Epistles the style of the two is in certain respects different. This difference of style Spitta<sup>1</sup> has sought to account for by making Timothy the real author of the second Epistle. He defends his theory by an appeal to the words of ii. 5: "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet (ἔτι) with you, I told you these things?" The word ἔτι here used has been a puzzle to others besides Spitta. Indeed the use of it has been made an argument in favour of the priority of 2 Thessalonians to what we call the first Epistle. The words 'while I was still with you' were thought to imply that the writer is referring to a time very shortly before that at which he is writing. Spitta argues that Timothy had been at Thessalonica more recently than had Paul, and thus the words would be more appropriate if used by Timothy. I am not

<sup>1</sup> *Zur Geschichte und Litteratur des Urchristentums.* Bd. 1, pp. 111 ff. (Göttingen 1893).

able to accept Spitta's theory of the Timothean authorship for several reasons, of which two may here be given.

In the first place there is no evidence that Timothy had been at Thessalonica in the interval between the writing of the two Epistles. As has been already pointed out 2 Cor. i. 19 seems to shew that Timothy stayed with Paul and Silas at Corinth and that he was not the bearer of 1 Thessalonians. We have no reason to suppose that he visited Thessalonica after the visit recorded in 1 Thess. iii. 2, which was prior to the writing of that Epistle.

Secondly it seems extremely unlikely that Timothy, who was only an attendant of the Apostle and not himself an Apostle of the church at Antioch as were Paul and Silas, would speak of himself in the first person in an Epistle which was written in the name of all three. No other instance can be given where the 'I' in a Pauline Epistle is anyone but St Paul himself.

It may be further added here that Spitta's theory of the Timothean authorship of the Epistle receives no support, as he supposes, from the general character of the eschatological passage. For, granting for the purpose of argument that the passage is Jewish in tone and thought, we must yet remember that Timothy was less of a Jew than was Paul. For not until Timothy was to travel as the Apostle's attendant had he received circumcision (Acts xvi. 3), though it must

be allowed that from his earliest years he had been instructed in the Scriptures (2 Tim. iii. 15).

Surely if St Paul did really write with his own hand the concluding verses of the Epistle (iii. 17, 18), then he must be the ultimate author of the whole Epistle. It would be written at his dictation, and the composition of it would hardly be entrusted to Timothy, least of all if the latter were to be allowed to introduce into it teaching which was more his own than that of St Paul, as Spitta suggests.

Perhaps it is desirable to say something now in explanation of the word *ἔτι* in ii. 5. I reject the theory that what we call the second Epistle is the earlier of the two<sup>1</sup>, and I reject too Spitta's theory that the real writer of 2 Thessalonians was some one who had visited Thessalonica more recently than St Paul, and who spoke in his own name when he said: "Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" Can any other explanation be given?

On the hypothesis of its genuineness the second Epistle was written so many months after St Paul left Thessalonica, that the word *ἔτι* seems at first sight pointless. But may it not find its explanation in a desire on the part of the Apostle to carry the Thessalonian Christians back to the very first message he

<sup>1</sup> It seems unnecessary to go into this question here. The reader may consult Bornemann's Commentary, p. 492.

had given to them? Even at the beginning—while I was still with you—I taught you of the signs which were to precede the day of the Lord. Why then do you draw conclusions from what I have since written which are in contradiction with what you were taught at first?

This seems to be a perfectly satisfactory explanation of the word ἐτι. Indeed this little word seems to me to tell in favour of the genuineness of the Epistle.

Let us now ask whether the difference in style and thought between the two Epistles is so great as to make the Pauline authorship of the second inconsistent with that of the first? This question I should certainly answer in the negative. It is not to be denied that the section i. 3—12 of the second Epistle is unlike anything in the first Epistle. But I cannot agree with Weiszäcker that St Paul is not accustomed so to write<sup>1</sup>.

We may compare with this passage one of similar purport in another Epistle, *viz.* Romans ii. 5—11. And though the subject treated is quite different in the two, the opening of 2 Thessalonians is in its stateliness not unworthy to be compared with that of Ephesians.

<sup>1</sup> See his *Das apostolische Zeitalter der Christlichen Kirche* 1892<sup>2</sup> p. 249 ff. "Andererteils wird die Rede breit und schwülstig auch abschweifend, wie Paulus nicht zu schreiben pflegt, so gleich im ersten Teile, wo er von der künftigen Vergeltung spricht."



I do not deny that there is a certain stiffness in 2 Thessalonians which is absent from the first Epistle. But it must be remembered that 1 Thessalonians was written at a time of severe strain and anxiety concerning the Thessalonian church, from which the Apostle had been prematurely separated. This strain was now removed, and when 2 Thessalonians was written the Apostle's mind may have been much engrossed with affairs at Corinth<sup>1</sup>.

Surely no great importance is to be attached to slight differences between the two Epistles, such for example as the address 'Grace to you and peace' of the first Epistle and 'Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ' of the second.

Nor again can the *εὐχαριστεῖν ὀφείλομεν* of 2 Thess. i. 3 be compared with the simple *εὐχαριστοῦμεν* of 1 Thess. i. 2 to prove that the second Epistle is composed from the first by a later writer by the well-known process of expansion adopted by pseudonymous writers. In the first Epistle the Apostle was aglow with thankfulness at the news he had received through Timothy of the Thessalonian church; but when he wrote the second Epistle he had to reprove serious unsettlement in the church consequent on the expectation of the immediate coming of the Day of the Lord. This reproof he administers in the second chapter. But first he acknowledges

<sup>1</sup> Compare 2 Thess. iii. 2 with Acts xviii. 12 ff.

that he still finds cause for thankfulness for their faith and love and he would not forget his obligation (*ὀφείλομεν*) in this respect; but as it is not all good news he has now received there is a certain reserve in his expression of thankfulness. He would remember his duty in this matter, but it is not so easy of fulfilment as before. Yet he holds himself back from administering his reproof until he has shewn that he is not unmindful of the progress the Thessalonians have made both in faith and love.

I cannot see that the difference between the two Epistles whether in style or tone is such as to tell against the Pauline authorship of the second Epistle after that of the first is admitted. That the first Epistle betrays warmer personal feeling than does the second may readily be allowed. But this would not prove the spuriousness of the second Epistle. If we compare together the two Epistles to the Corinthians which were written the one not long after the other, we shall find there great differences between the two. Where for example in the first Epistle should we find a passage like 2 Cor. i. 3—7? Possibly Weiszäcker would characterise this passage too as “schwülstig.”

I am disposed to agree with Jülicher<sup>1</sup> that the linguistic arguments against the genuineness of the Epistle are the weakest of all. Had only the two

<sup>1</sup> See his *Einleitung in das neue Test.* p. 40. “Am wenigsten bedeuten hierbei die sprachliche Argumente, im Ganzen ist der Stil so echt paulinisch, dass man den Fälscher bewundern müsste, der ihn so geschickt nachgeahmt.”

Thessalonian Epistles come down to us claiming to be the work of St Paul, had we no Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, &c., then the difference between the two Epistles to the Thessalonians might have seemed to tell against the genuineness of the second when that of the first is admitted. But as it is, we see from the various Epistles that St Paul could write in more than one tone; and that different Epistles, and indeed different parts of the same Epistle, have different characteristics.

We must now pass from objections to the genuineness of the second Epistle on the ground of its disagreement with the first to consider yet another. It has been said that the Epistle betrays that it is of a later date than that to which it must belong, if it is genuine, by its reference to forged letters. It is contended that it is most unlikely that at such an early stage in the Apostle's career attempts should have been made to pass off letters in his name. Such attempts would belong to a later time<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> So Pfeiderer in *Das Urchristenthum* p. 78: "Nur das mag hier noch hinzugefügt werden, dass sich die Unechtheit dieses Briefes gerade auch durch die geflissentliche Betonung seiner Echtheit und Warnung vor falschen Paulusbriefen augenfällig verräth. Zu einer solchen Vorsichtsmassregel konnte Paulus selbst noch keinerlei Anlass haben, wie wir ja auch sonst in keinem seiner (echten) Briefe eine Spur davon finden. Falsche Paulusbriefe konnte es gewiss noch nicht in Anfang seiner apostolischen Schriftstellerei überhaupt nicht wohl zu seinem Lebzeiten geben, daher ist die Warnung vor solchem das sichere Zeichen der nachapostolischen Zeit."

This objection is based on words used in ii. 2, viz., δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν, which are taken to mean 'by epistle purporting to come from us.' We will first quote the context according to the R.V.: "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present."

Let us for the present assume without question that these words, δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν, do really mean 'by epistle purporting to come from us.' The objection made above then confronts us. In reply to it, it might be said that we cannot settle a question of this sort relating to matters of fact after any *à priori* method. Unexpected though the reference to forged letters is, yet this passage shews that attempts at forgery had been made; and it might be said that it is certainly not an impossibility however unlikely we might *à priori* think it to be.

I must, however, frankly acknowledge that attempts at forgery under the very eye of the Apostle in a church so recently founded by him do seem to me so unlikely that I feel that there is real force in the objection, if δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν means what we are taking it for the present to mean.

But then there is a counter difficulty. For if the second Epistle be not genuine but the work of a

later writer, it would seem that when he says 'by letter purporting to come from us' he is seeking to discredit the statements of some epistle which is regarded as Pauline by those for whose information or edification he is writing. Can it then be the case that it is our first Epistle to the Thessalonians that he is wishing to discredit? It must have been some epistle addressed to the Thessalonians, otherwise there would be no point in the pseudonymous writer addressing his letter to that church. It might then seem that a writer who wished to give to his eschatological views apostolic sanction embodied them in an epistle purporting to be by St Paul. But these eschatological views were at variance with those expressed in 1 Thessalonians, which he therefore sought to discredit. I have already said that I cannot at all see that the eschatological views of the second Epistle are at variance with those of the first. But to those who insist that there is a discrepancy between the two, the words δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν may find their explanation in the way I have suggested, and be taken as an attempt to discredit 1 Thessalonians<sup>1</sup>. But to this there is an insurmountable difficulty, for

<sup>1</sup> This is the view that was taken by Hilgenfeld. See his *Einleitung in das neue Test.* p. 646: "Erst in späterer Zeit konnte ein Schriftsteller, welchem die Eschatologie des 1 Thessalonicherbriefs nicht mehr genügte und zusagte, darauf kommen, seinen eigenen, untergeschobenen Paulusbrief an die Thessalonicher in solcher Weise zu beglaubigen, und den ältern, welcher seiner fortgeschrittenern Eschatologie im Wege stand, als einen bloss vermeintlich paulinischen zu verdächtigen."

it is inconceivable that a writer should imitate the style and diction of the very Epistle whose apostolic authorship he wishes to discredit. For we have already set forth the quite remarkable resemblance between the two Thessalonian Epistles which shews that if both be not genuine the writer of the one used the other.

It might be said that the writer of 2 Thessalonians was not seeking to discredit 1 Thessalonians as a Pauline Epistle, but only wished to make it appear that the Apostle's expectations of the manner of the Advent had been misunderstood by his readers. But in this case what is the reference of the words *δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν*? What other Epistle addressed to the Thessalonian church and regarded as Pauline was there?

If it be said that these words *δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* do not mean what we have been taking them to mean—by letter purporting to come from us—that they are not used to discredit any epistle but only to correct erroneous conclusions that might be drawn from 1 Thessalonians, then of course they fail to supply any argument against the genuineness of the second Epistle on the ground of its references to forged letters.

The point then is that if you allow that the words *δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* do refer to forged letters, and that therefore 2 Thessalonians is not genuine, you are lodged in a serious difficulty; for the words are

pointless as used by a pseudonymous writer unless they have some definite reference. The only way I have been able to see in which they can be interpreted is by supposing them to refer to 1 Thessalonians, but this reference is excluded by the extraordinary similarity between the two Epistles. And if you give up the interpretation of δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν as 'by letter purporting to come from us,' you have forfeited your objection to the genuineness of 2 Thessalonians based on its reference to forged letters.

I am aware, however, that the concluding words of the Epistle, "The salutation of me Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle" &c., have been also quoted as proof of the spuriousness of the Epistle. For though they do not actually refer to forged letters, they are thought to imply that such were in existence. But this is a position which I must challenge. It seems to me that in these words St Paul, whom I take to be author of the Epistle, is not discrediting any Epistle circulated as written by him, but he is giving assurance that this particular Epistle is from him. Though it is not written throughout in his own hand yet it has his authority. It contains his instructions. It bears his signature. Undue importance seems to me to have been attached to these words of iii. 17 because of a misinterpretation of the words δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν.

To these words we must now revert and examine them more closely in relation to their context. That

the meaning of the words is by no means obvious is clear from the fact that commentators have not agreed as to the scope of the words *ὡς δι' ἡμῶν*, whether, that is, they refer to *ἐπιστολῆς* only, or to *λόγου* as well as *ἐπιστολῆς*. Lightfoot even goes so far as to make them apply to *πνεύματος* as well as to *λόγου* and *ἐπιστολῆς*.

In the first place I feel considerable doubt whether if *ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* refers only to *ἐπιστολῆς*, the meaning of the words can be (as in the Revised Version) "by letter as from us." For *διὰ* is not the natural preposition to use to express this. The preposition *παρὰ* before *ἡμῶν* would have been more natural. In 2 Chron. xxx. 6 (LXX) we have *σὺν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς παρὰ τοῦ βασιλέως*; in Acts ix. 2, *ἠτήσατο παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐπιστολὰς*, and in xxii. 5, *παρ' ὧν καὶ ἐπιστολὰς δεξάμενος*. In 2 Cor. iii. 1 we have *ἐκ* used to express the origin of the letters—*ἢ μὴ χρῆζομεν ὡς τινες συστατικῶν ἐπιστολῶν πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἢ ἐξ ὑμῶν*; But *διὰ* would suggest the intermediary through whom the letter was written or given rather than the ultimate author<sup>1</sup>. I think then that *δι' ἐπιστολῆς ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* is inappropriate to express 'by letter purporting to come from us.'

Nor indeed does it seem to me likely that the words mean 'by letter purporting to have been written by us,' or, if *ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* be applied to *λόγου* also, 'by

<sup>1</sup> See for example 1 Peter v. 12: *διὰ Σιλονανοῦ ὑμῖν τοῦ πιστοῦ ἀδελφοῦ, ὡς λογίζομαι, δι' ὀλίγων ἔγραψα κ.τ.λ.*



word or letter supposed to have been said or written by us.' For ὑπό would be more appropriate than διὰ to express this. διὰ is suggestive of the instrument or means rather than of agency, though it must be acknowledged that we have it in the New Testament used of God Himself (1 Cor. i. 9; Heb. ii. 10, δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα)<sup>1</sup>. In general, it must be allowed, διὰ would only be used of the agent if he were acting for someone else; and in this case he is rather the means or instrument<sup>2</sup>. But in the particular passage we are considering there would be no point in the words ὡς δι' ἡμῶν as referring to ἐπιστολῆς, or to ἐπιστολῆς and λόγου together, unless there had been some attempt to give authoritativeness to the written letter or spoken word on the ground that they were apostolic. But the preposition διὰ fails to trace the letter or word to its original source, whereas this was necessary in order to render them authoritative.

My conclusion then thus far on this point is that ὡς δι' ἡμῶν does not mean 'as from us' nor 'as by us' with a reference to ἐπιστολῆς, or to λόγου and ἐπιστολῆς, the preposition διὰ being unsuitable for both these cases.

Paley in his *Horæ Paulinæ* suggests as the meaning of the words μήτε διὰ λόγου, μήτε δι' ἐπιστολῆς

<sup>1</sup> See the note of Lightfoot on 1 Cor. i. 9 in *Notes on Epistles of St Paul*, and of Westcott on Heb. ii. 10 in his *Commentary*.

<sup>2</sup> See Heb. ii. 2.

ὥς δι' ἡμῶν, *quasi nos quid tale aut dixerimus aut scripserimus*, that is 'as though we had spoken or written to this effect.' But this is rightly objected to by Lightfoot, who says: "As no mention has gone before of the *purport* of the tidings or letter, the expression ὥς δι' ἡμῶν, 'as if coming from us,' cannot be intended to throw discredit on the interpretation of this purport, but on the letter or tidings themselves<sup>1</sup>."

I venture to suggest that Paley is right however in taking ἐπιστολῆς in effect to refer to the first Epistle, which had been misunderstood by some of the Thessalonian Christians. What was said in that Epistle seemed to give countenance to their unsettlement of mind respecting the Parousia. But it was not that Epistle alone that had brought this unsettlement about, but 'prophesying' and teaching also.

I would suggest that the words ὥς δι' ἡμῶν, 'as through us,' refer not to λόγου nor to ἐπιστολῆς but to σαλευθῆναι and θροεῖσθαι. We should then understand the passage to mean: That ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either through prophesying, or through oral teaching or through letter, as if such disturbance came through us &c. It seems to me that in this way we account for the preposition διὰ before ἡμῶν, it being just the same preposition as occurs before πνεύματος, λόγου and ἐπιστολῆς. According to this interpretation the words ὥς δι' ἡμῶν do not discredit the letter, but they imply a

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on Epistles of St Paul.*

rebuke for the use which had been made of it to cause such unsettlement in the church. The words then are not equivalent to an adjective agreeing with ἐπιστολῆς (= a letter forged in our name), but they are parenthetical and explanatory of the mention of ἐπιστολῆς (= by letter, as if *we* had given any sanction to these disturbing views).

Of course the anarthrous ἐπιστολῆς cannot mean ‘*the* letter’ (that is the first Epistle to Thess.), but the mention of ἐπιστολῇ here along with πνεύματος and λόγου, might be due entirely to the fact that the first Epistle had been used to support the unsettlement. The Apostle says *in effect* by the parenthetical ὡς δι’ ἡμῶν: What we wrote does not support this unsettlement which has taken place.

It is possible that πνεύματος and λόγου are to be understood as prophecy and oral instruction *given by the writers of the Epistle themselves*. What would be meant would then be: No prophecy, oral instruction or written word of ours gives any support to the unsettlement. But it is neither πνεῦμα nor λόγος nor ἐπιστολῇ which is disclaimed, but responsibility for the disturbance of mind which has arisen.

It may be said that if this is what is meant, it is very tersely put and the meaning thereby made ambiguous. But I think that what we have to remember is that, if this were the meaning, it would be quite well understood by those for whom the Epistle was intended. And in this connection I

would refer to the canon laid down on page 67. Our difficulty in interpreting the words is that we are not first of all in possession of the facts. We do not know exactly what was going on in the Thessalonian church. We have to glean what we can from the Epistles. If the first Epistle had been taken to mean that the Day of the Lord was imminent, so that there resulted unsettlement and neglect of the ordinary duties of life, this unsettlement would not be said by Paul and Silvanus to be 'through us,' for they would disclaim the interpretation which had been put upon their words, but 'as if it were through us.' The words *ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* seem to me to be just such a disclaimer as would be required to meet the case.

I have examined the meaning of this phrase *ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* at some length because it seemed to me to be of some importance. I can only wonder that the conclusion to which I have come has not been reached by some previous writer. It seems to have been too readily assumed that *ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* is adjectivally in agreement with *ἐπιστολῆς*, and so the force and appropriateness of the preposition *διὰ* do not seem to have been properly considered.

It has been thought by some who deny the apostolic authorship of the second Epistle that the writer of it attaches undue importance to apostolic letters for the time to which it purports to belong. If the

interpretation of the phrase *ὡς δι' ἡμῶν* which I have given above be correct this objection can no longer rely for its support on the verse in which these words occur. For it must be remembered that *ἐπιστολῆς* is here only one of three means by which the unsettlement came about. What point would there be in the word *πνεύματος*, to say nothing of *λόγον*, as used by a later writer?

A further point which may be made here is that it would be strange that a later writer wishing to pass off his letter as Pauline should have drawn attention to what would be its weakest point, viz. the apostolic signature, the *σημεῖον* of iii. 17. It would be a strange literary phenomenon that an Epistle purporting to be Pauline and addressed to a particular church, still existing and therefore able to detect its spuriousness, should have appeared, and become recognised without question or dispute of any kind.

Exception has been taken to the use of *πάση* in the phrase *ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ*—it being argued that at the time to which the Epistle is made to belong St Paul had written but few letters. It is quite true that there are extant no Epistles, purporting to be Pauline, earlier than 2 Thessalonians except the First Epistle to the Thessalonians; but we do not know what other Epistles the Apostle may have already

written to the various churches. As the first Epistle had, as it seems to me, been used in support of the unsettlement in regard to the second advent, it was important that the Apostle in this second Epistle, in which he disclaims such interpretation of the words he had before written, should be careful to give evidence that this disclaimer really was from himself. This then he does by drawing attention to the salutation by his own hand which had been a *σημεῖον* in the first Epistle—note the singular in *ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς κ.τ.λ.* of 1 Thess. v. 27—and was a *σημεῖον* of this also. If it be said that ‘*both* letters’ would have been more appropriate than ‘*every* letter,’ the obvious answer is that ‘*both*’ would have implied that the Apostle had written two letters and no others were to be expected; whereas how did he know whether it would not be necessary to write many times yet to this particular church? The words *ἐν πάσῃ ἐπιστολῇ* are quite general.

But the real cause of the difficulty in accepting the Pauline authorship of 2 Thessalonians is the un-Pauline character of ii. 3—12. This objection still remains when we have disposed of others. The question is: Can it be met?

We must be perfectly clear as to what is meant when it is said that the passage is un-Pauline. Nothing more may be meant by this epithet than that the passage deals with a subject which is nowhere else

treated of in St Paul's Epistles. But this would not prove that the passage could not have been written by St Paul. It is quite true that nowhere else in the Pauline Epistles have we mention of the ἀποστασία, or of the ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας or of ὁ κατέχων and so on. But unless, by comparison with admittedly Pauline Epistles, it can be proved that St Paul could not have used these expressions, or could not have used them as they are used in this particular passage, you have not proved the Epistle spurious. If the teaching of this passage contradicted the teaching of what are recognised to be Pauline Epistles it might then be called un-Pauline. But I cannot find that there is any such contradiction. It is simply that the passage treats of what is not elsewhere referred to in St Paul.

Nor can it be said that the style of this passage is un-Pauline. If the first twelve verses of the second chapter were not written by St Paul, it must be allowed that they are an extremely clever imitation of his style. We note for example the anacoluthon at verse 4 and the parenthesis of verse 5. The whole passage is characterised by earnestness and real feeling, such as it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for any imitator to have displayed. A pseudonymous writer would have said so much more than is actually said. The passage is tersely expressed. It is moreover fluent and in no way laboured.

The theory put forward by some critics<sup>1</sup> that there was a genuine second Epistle to the Thessalonians which has come down to us in an interpolated form, the eschatological section having been added to it by a later hand, does not at all commend itself. The second chapter clearly supplies the motive of the whole, whether the Epistle be genuine or not. If the section to which exception is taken as un-Pauline be removed, there is nothing to explain the writing of the rest. Indeed this explanation of interpolation seems to be an acknowledgment of the weakness of the case against the Epistle.

It remains for us now to enquire whether the eschatological section of the Epistle can be interpreted on the hypothesis of its Pauline authorship. It is to this point that the rest of this introduction will be devoted. The subject is too large to form an addition to the present chapter, which is already long enough to tax the patience of the reader. What seems to me clear thus far is that the disputed passage is not un-Pauline in the sense that it is different in style from the other Epistles, nor is it un-Pauline because its statements are in contradiction with what is contained in Epistles admittedly Pauline. In particular the supposed discrepancies between the passage and 1 Thessalonians have been demonstrated to be non-

<sup>1</sup> See in particular P. W. Schmidt, *Short Protestant Commentary on the N. T.*



existent. The section is only un-Pauline in the sense that it treats of a subject not elsewhere treated of in the Pauline Epistles.

It may be that the Epistle is genuine but that we have lost the key to this difficult section of it beyond recovery. As however the subject of it formed a subject of instruction to the Thessalonian converts when the Apostle was with them, it would seem that it should not be hopeless to come at its meaning. The fact that so many diverse interpretations of the passage have already been attempted may seem to some a good reason for refusing to enter upon yet another. But as I am clear in my own mind as to the main intention of the passage, I venture to put forward a detailed examination of it, which I am prepared to see freely criticised.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE ESCHATOLOGICAL SECTION OF 2 THESSALONIANS II.

IT will be understood from what has been said at the end of the preceding chapter that our purpose now is to discover if possible the proper interpretation of the eschatological section of 2 Thess. ii.<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter it will be assumed that the Epistle is genuine ; and as, on this hypothesis, the date of the Epistle is determined, we shall have, to assist us in our enquiry, the historical circumstances of the time. We have seen in the last chapter that there is no adequate reason apart from the interpretation of this difficult passage for denying the Pauline authorship of the Epistle. It seems then reasonable to take as our hypothesis the genuineness of the Epistle and to seek to interpret the eschatological section consistently

<sup>1</sup> It may be well to say here that it is no part of the purpose of this Introduction to give the *history* of the interpretation of 2 Thess. ii. The reader who wishes for information on this point will do well to consult Bornemann's Commentary *Die Thessalonicherbriefe* (Göttingen 1894). This is the best and fullest commentary on the Epistles that has yet appeared, and it deserves to be translated into English.

with this hypothesis. If the interpretation we give to this passage as the result of our investigation seems unstrained and natural, we shall have a further argument in favour of the genuineness of the Epistle. I claim that the interpretation to be given in this chapter is far more natural than are either of the two principal interpretations given to the passage on the hypothesis of its post-pauline origin. I refer to what may be called the *Nero-redivivus* interpretation given by Baur, and to the *Gnostic* interpretation given by Hilgenfeld<sup>1</sup> and supported by Bahnsen<sup>2</sup>.

Now it is important to bear in mind that whatever is referred to in the words ἡ ἀποστασία and whoever is intended by ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, who must be revealed before the parousia of the Lord, the passage distinctly states that there were *already* symptoms of the ἀνομία—τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας. This fact of itself disposes of futurist interpretations of the passage, such as have been indulged in by those who would find the fulfilment of the prophecy herein contained in the papacy. Whatever view may be taken of the appropriateness of the application of the actual words ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα κ.τ.λ. to the Bishop of Rome in his claims of infallibility, it must be acknowledged that to St Paul the words had no such meaning. What we are concerned to discover is what

<sup>1</sup> *Einleitung in das neue Test.* pp. 650 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Jahrbuch für prot. Theologie* 1880 pp. 681 ff.

St Paul meant when he wrote these words. We have no evidence whatever that to him there was at that time any sign of a usurpation of divine prerogatives on the part of any within the Christian Church.

We have to determine if possible what St Paul meant when he wrote of the ἀποστασία. We want to know who it is that is intended by ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας whom the Apostle describes as “the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalted himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.” We want to know to whom St Paul referred when he spoke of ‘the Restrainer’ (ὁ κατέχων) and what he meant by τὸ κατέχον, the restraining cause which kept the ἀνομία in check, and the Man of ἀνομία from appearing. We want to get at the reference contained in the words τὸ μυστήριον ἥδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας. We would know whether τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (v. 4) is to be interpreted literally of the sanctuary of the temple at Jerusalem or figuratively. Here are many difficult problems.

Let us look first of all at this word ἀποστασία. The passage seems to say that the day of the Lord will not come until after the ἀποστασία. We note the definite article—the apostasy, the revolt, the rebellion. It was some expected apostasy or revolt, something as would appear from verse 5 of which the Apostle had spoken when he was with the Thessa-

Ionians, so that he could now write of it briefly as ἡ ἀποστασία. But does he mean an ἀποστασία in the religious sense of the word, that is to say what we should speak of as 'apostasy,' a revolt from, a rebellion against God, or does he use the word in its political sense, meaning simply rebellion, and not rebellion against God? Now ἀποστασία does not necessarily mean religious apostasy. It is the later Greek equivalent of ἀπόστασις=revolt. In this sense it is undoubtedly used for example in Plutarch, *Life of Galba* 1: κάλλιστον ἔργον διαβαλὼν τῷ μισθῷ τὴν ἀπὸ Νέρωνος ἀποστασίαν προδοσίαν γενομένην. It is generally assumed by commentators that ἀποστασία is used in a religious sense in 2 Thess. ii. 3; it is well however to remember that a non-religious sense is possible. And there have not been wanting some who have so interpreted it here. Primasius<sup>1</sup> suggests that it may refer to the revolt of the peoples from the dominion of Rome. And some have thought that what is meant is the rebellion of the Jews against the Roman dominion in their own land. Such a rebellion

<sup>1</sup> He says: "Discessio primum: Desertio veritatis vel sui principatus; sive discessio gentium a Romano imperio, sicut in Daniele per bestiam et imaginis figuram monstratur. Discessio autem diabolus non immerito dicitur ab eo quod discessit a Deo."

S. Chrysostom interprets ἀποστασία in a religious sense: τί ἐστὶν ἡ ἀποστασία; Αὐτὸν καλεῖ τὸν ἀντίχριστον ἀποστασίαν, ὡς πολλοὺς μέλλοντα ἀπολλύναι καὶ ἀφιστᾶν. Theodoret almost repeats these words when he says: 'Αποστασίαν αὐτὸν ἐκάλεσε τὸν Ἀντίχριστον, ἀπὸ τοῦ πράγματος αὐτῷ τοῦνομα τεθεικώς. Ἀποστῆσαι γὰρ ἅπαντας τῆς ἀληθείας πειρᾶται.

did as a matter of fact precede the awful destruction of Jerusalem, which event was associated, as we can see from the synoptic Gospels, in the minds of the early Christians with the coming of Christ.

Suppose for a moment that ἀποστασία is used in a religious sense and means ‘apostasy.’ We have then to enquire whether it is likely that it is a Christian apostasy, or a Jewish, or a heathen one that is meant. That a Christian apostasy is what is meant has been inferred from the words of our Lord (St Matt. xxiv. 12) in His eschatological discourse: “Because lawlessness (ἀνομία) shall be multiplied, the love of the many (τῶν πολλῶν) shall wax cold.” But it might be said in answer to this that the words ψυγῆσεται ἡ ἀγάπη τῶν πολλῶν express indifference rather than active opposition such as ἀποστασία would seem to imply. Further it must be admitted that there is no evidence that at this time there was any tendency to apostasy on the part of Christians. The words of St Paul contained in 1 Tim. iv. 1 which speak of a falling away from the faith in later times were written some years later than 2 Thessalonians. The present tense λέγει in τὸ πνεῦμα ῥητῶς λέγει seems to point to recent utterances of the Spirit; and the words ἀποστήσονται τινες τῆς πίστεως are hardly strong enough to denote a general apostasy.

There is no evidence then that St Paul expected a general apostasy among professing Christians before the coming of Christ.

So then some critics have interpreted the sphere of the apostasy to be Judaism. This view has been clearly developed by Dr B. Weiss in his *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*<sup>1</sup>, but I do not find his reasoning convincing. We will first give his summary of the interpretation of the passage. He says<sup>2</sup>: "While the Gentiles, it is true, often remained disobedient to the Gospel and persecuted its followers, still it was only unbelieving Judaism that had as yet shown itself to be the real seat of hostility to Christ. (b) This hostility of Judaism to the Gospel must now increase until it comes to be a total apostasy from God and His law. (c) Not till then could there issue forth from it the pseudo-Messiah, who, with blasphemous arrogance, and equipped with Satanic powers, will seduce the world to believe in his lies. (d) The Roman government, it is true, still stood as an obstacle in the way of the pseudo-Messianic revolution; but when once, the Roman power being overthrown, Antichrist has attained full dominion, then the true Messiah must also come to make an end of His adversary, and even the present generation is to witness this catastrophe."

It must be acknowledged that Weiss is right in seeking to interpret the passage in question in the light of the historical circumstances of the time at which it was written. And it is true as Weiss says

<sup>1</sup> See the section *The Pauline Apocalypse*.

<sup>2</sup> English translation, Vol. I. p. 305.

that the real opponents of the Apostle in his preaching of the Gospel at this time were the unbelieving Jews. "The evil and unreasonable people who everywhere stood in his way.....were the fanatical Jews. They had for the most part remained disobedient to the Gospel, they had persecuted him from the commencement of his missionary activity, they had everywhere stirred up the heathen populace against him, and had shown themselves his deadly enemies. It was against their evil calumnies and slanders that he had to defend himself, in the first Epistle, before the young Christian church, which they sought, by these means, to turn away from their teacher. Therefore the whole wrath of the apostle breaks out against the unbelieving Jews in the middle of that apologetic section (1 Thess. ii. 14—16). As they had once slain the prophets, so they have put to death the Lord Himself; as they have persecuted the churches in Judæa, so they persecute the apostle and his companions; as they please not God, so they are contrary to all men, inasmuch as they seek to hinder the mission to the Gentiles, and, thereby, their salvation through the preaching of the Gospel. It is as if they wished to make full the measure of their sins although the wrath of God is already resting upon them (*ἔφθασε*) in the highest degree (*εἰς τέλος*). They are therefore the real opponents of Christ and His Gospel; it is in them that the antichristian principle reveals itself. It is in conscious opposition to the Mediator



and finisher of salvation that the sin, which He has come to destroy, must reach its climax."

I have quoted this passage from Weiss in full as it puts the case for the interpretation of the ἀποστασία as referring to a Jewish apostasy in a clear light<sup>1</sup>. But I am not convinced by it. For while I acknowledge that it is clear that St Paul regarded the opposition of the Jews as hopeless and saw that the doom of the nation under the wrath of God was sealed (ἐφθασεν δὲ ἐπ' αὐτοὺς ἡ ὀργὴ εἰς τέλος—1 Thess. ii. 16), I cannot see that we have any evidence that the Apostle expected their opposition to culminate in the revelation of a false Messiah who would lay claim to divine honours. It must be allowed that Christ had Himself foretold that false Messiahs and false prophets would arise; but had it been foretold of any one of these that he would oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God? It may well be questioned whether any false Messiah claiming to be divine could ever have won any recognition for himself among the Jews. Such a claim would have seemed to them blasphemous in the highest degree. Nor can I at all agree with Dr Charles that the fact that the Antichrist regards the temple at Jerusalem as the dwelling-place of God makes the Jewish origin of the antichristian

<sup>1</sup> Other writers have taken much the same view as Weiss here does.

principle in a very high degree probable<sup>1</sup>. For, while it seems to me likely that τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ of 2 Thess. ii. 4 has reference to the temple at Jerusalem (though this may reasonably be called in question) I fail to see the force of Dr Charles' remark. Indeed we may ask whether Caligula when he wished to set up his statue in the Holy of Holies regarded the temple at Jerusalem as the dwelling-place of God. He knew the Jews so regarded it, and he sought by his impious act to win divine honours for himself.

But to return to Dr Weiss' exposition. Putting aside for the time all reference to the "Man of lawlessness" and his claim to divine honours we revert to the ἀποστασία. We again quote Dr Weiss: "Paul describes the impending apostasy as the point which the development of evil must reach; for under all circumstances the sin of the apostate is more heinous than the sin of him who has not yet known and served the true God. For this very reason there cannot possibly be any reference to an apostasy within the province of heathendom; that which is spoken of can only be the apostasy of the nation, which, as contrasted with the Gentiles, is the worshipper and servant of the one God. If we could assume that Paul had really thought of the apostasy which is foretold by Daniel, then it would be perfectly clear that it is only an apostasy within the province of Judaism that can be thought of; for the direct transference of

<sup>1</sup> See his *Eschatology*, p. 382, footnote.

that which is prophesied of the Old Testament people of God to the New Testament Church is not indicated by anything in the sphere of thought of our Epistle ; nor is there the slightest indication in the Epistle itself that Paul expects an apostasy in the Church, while the whole of the description in *vv.* 3—12 plainly speaks rather of events which take place outside of it, and which affect it only in so far as they ultimately bring about the coming of Christ. Now, in what follows, this ἀποστασία is characterised by ἀνομία ; and hence it is as impossible to seek the latter as the former upon the soil of heathendom, which besides cannot really be accused of a rejection, in principle, of the law (ἀνομία), as the culmination of its sin, seeing that it does not possess the divine νόμος in the specific sense<sup>1</sup>."

I have already expressed my agreement with the contention that there is not the slightest indication in the Epistle that St Paul expects an apostasy in the Church. But I find myself unable to agree with Dr Weiss that the choice lies only between an apostasy in the Church and an apostasy in the sphere of Judaism. I reject the apostasy in the Church but I do not feel bound therefore to interpret ἀποστασία (supposing it to be used in a religious sense) as a Jewish apostasy. Nor does the fact that the ἀποστασία is characterised by ἀνομία in any way strengthen Dr Weiss' case. For, as man belongs ideally to God,

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I. p. 307.

what greater falling away from God can there be than that he, the creature, should claim the honours due only to the Creator? What *ἀνομία* could there be greater<sup>1</sup>? And when we bear in mind that in St Paul's view all men were descended from Adam, who had known his Maker though he had disobeyed Him, we see that the *ἀποστασία* might well refer to some display of arrogance in heathenism, whereby divine honours were claimed by a man.

The point then which we have reached thus far is that, even if *ἀποστασία* is used in the passage under consideration in a religious sense, we are not by refusing to interpret it as a Christian apostasy committed to the conclusion that it can only refer to an apostasy within the sphere of Judaism. So far as the particular word used is concerned, there is nothing inapplicable to some *ἀνομία* in heathenism.

We will then pass from the *ἀποστασία*, the application of which we see to be a matter of considerable uncertainty, to examine more particularly the reference contained in the words *ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας, ὁ ἀντικείμενος καὶ ὑπεραιρούμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καθίαι, ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἔστιν θεός*. I have reproduced these words as they are

<sup>1</sup> I must draw attention to the fact that Dr Weiss himself has a section in the very treatise from which I have been quoting which he entitles *Der Abfall des Heidenthums*. He here allows that *ἀνομία* applies to heathenism in 2 Cor. vi. 14.

printed in the Westcott and Hort text, in order that the quotation from Daniel xi. 36 f. may receive due attention.

Over against the "Man of lawlessness" and his blasphemous self-exaltation we have to set the τὸ κατέχον of verse 6, and to notice that this restraining cause seems to be embodied in a *person* who is called in verse 7 ὁ κατέχων. His power is still operative so that the "Man of lawlessness," or ὁ ἄνομος, is prevented from making his full appearance.

A full and interesting interpretation of this difficult passage by Bousset<sup>1</sup> has found considerable favour since its publication in 1895. Suggestive as this interpretation is I have not found it convincing.

Put briefly the theory is that St Paul in this passage is making use of a legendary belief current in his time that before the coming of the Messiah an Antichrist would arise from the Jewish people, and claim divine honours for himself in the temple of Jerusalem. This legend is supposed to have been partly derived from Daniel and to have been partly independent. In the legend the Roman empire is regarded as the power which keeps Antichrist in check. So then the Roman empire is intended by St Paul's τὸ κατέχον and the Roman Emperor by ὁ κατέχων.

<sup>1</sup> *Der Antichrist in der Ueberlieferung des Judenthums, des neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche.* Göttingen. There is an English translation, *The Antichrist Legend*, published by Hutchinson and Co.

That Bousset's work is characterised by great learning and research is not to be denied. But there are some weak points in his reasoning and some unjustifiable assumptions.

For example, after quoting St Paul's words from 2 Thess. ii. 9—12 he maintains that there can be scarcely any doubt that it was the unbelieving Jews that the Apostle was referring to when he spoke of those who "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." But why, we may ask, is there so little doubt that the reference here is to the unbelieving Jews? There are words very similar to these in the Epistle to the Romans where the reference is to the unbelieving heathen. Thus in Rom. i. 18 we read: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold down the truth in unrighteousness." The context makes it abundantly clear that it is the heathen world that the Apostle is referring to. It cannot then be said with any fairness that the terms used in 2 Thess. ii. 10 and 12 imply that the reference is to the Jews, who have rejected the true Messiah, and have therefore received the false one from God. Nor can I see that there is, as Bousset says, any parallel presented by the words of St John v. 43, "I am come in my Father's name

and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name him ye will receive." In a footnote he says in reference to these words: "I do not know who else can here be meant but the Antichrist. For the reference is here to a definite and distinct person &c." There seems to be nothing definite in the words *ἐὰν ἄλλος ἔλθῃ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τῷ ἰδίῳ*.

The fact that the beast who comes out of the abyss in Rev. xi. 7 appears in Jerusalem does not seem to me to go far to prove the expectation which Bousset contends for of a false Messiah claiming divine honours in the temple.

Nor can the words of St Matthew xxiv. 15 which speak of the "abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" be referred to this false Messiah of Judaism unless some better reason can be given than Bousset has offered us. He assumes arbitrarily that this section of the synoptists does not give us actual predictions spoken by Christ. If you assume this and assume also that there was an Antichrist legend of the nature Bousset describes then it is not difficult to make *τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως* refer to this Antichrist. But you have given no proof of it at all.

It cannot, I think, be denied that there was an expectation in apostolic times of the advent of an Antichrist. In the first Epistle of St John we read: "Little children, it is the last hour: and as ye heard

that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists<sup>1</sup>." It has been pointed out that the anarthrous Ἀντίχριστος shews that the term had become current as a technical name<sup>2</sup>. Bousset argues that Beliar in 2 Cor. vi. 15 is the name of Antichrist. But even if it were admitted that this is so, there would still remain the doubt whether there was a general expectation that Antichrist would appear from among the Jews. It must be allowed that such an expectation was current after apostolic times. Bousset has proved this conclusively. But it seems to me most probable that this expectation arose from a mistaken interpretation of the very passage in 2 Thessalonians which we are now considering. Bousset thinks that a short passage such as this could hardly have been enough to create such an expectation, particularly as according to this belief the Roman power was the restrainer of Antichrist, and not itself antichristian as in the Apocalypse of St John. A few verses such as these in 2 Thess. ii. would not in his opinion be sufficient to outweigh a large apocalyptic work such as that. But I do not feel this difficulty myself at all. I think that the passage we are considering is just such as to create the expectation and belief that we do as a matter of fact find.

Bousset makes a good deal in his argument of the omission of the tribe of Dan in the enumeration

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Westcott *in loc.*



of the twelve tribes of Israel in Rev. vii. 5—8. He thinks that of Dan is omitted in the enumeration because it was from that tribe that Antichrist was to arise. Such certainly was the explanation of the omission given by Irenæus. A careful student of Scripture would of course quickly detect the absence of the name of Dan from the list and would naturally try to account for it. If the passage in 2 Thess. ii. which we are investigating had, as I believe it had, created an expectation of a Jewish Antichrist, it was not a very long way to the conclusion to which Irenæus himself came that Dan was omitted because from that tribe Antichrist was to spring.

I do not propose to give any explanation of my own why Dan is omitted from the list of tribes, for I have none to offer<sup>1</sup>. But one may be permitted in the face of the expression ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραήλ of verse 4 to doubt whether there is any intentional omission of one of the tribes at all.

The real weakness of Bousset's theory seems to me to lie in the absence of evidence for a Jewish pre-Christian belief in the coming of a Jewish Antichrist. Jewish apocalypses which were composed in Christian times really prove nothing in regard to this point. The theory falls to the ground unless there was a Jewish belief, which St Paul himself adopted and

<sup>1</sup> A reason has been given by Dr E. C. Selwyn in his *Christian Prophets*, pp. 200 ff. I am not convinced by it, but it is interesting.

taught, that an Antichrist was to spring out of Israel and to claim divine honours for himself.

The name 'Antichrist' itself seems so far as the evidence goes to be of Christian coinage. It has not been found in any work earlier than the first Epistle of St John. There as we see it is used almost as a proper name, but we notice how St John interprets the opposition of Antichrist spiritually, thereby seeming to imply that the belief which had become prevalent may have taken a wrong direction.

It must be allowed that the Jews may well have looked for an adversary against God and His people on the strength of the statements in the book of Daniel. But it must be seriously questioned whether there was any Jewish belief that an adversary of God claiming divine honours was to spring out of Israel itself.

The conclusion then is that Bousset's theory of the Antichrist legend is not proved, and some other explanation must be sought of the reference in 2 *Thess.* ii.

Now it might be contended that St Paul is referring to something of which he had knowledge as the result of special revelation to himself. But while this is a possible explanation, it is one which we should be chary of accepting. It is possible to over-estimate the place of 'revelations' in St Paul's experience. For example the late Archbishop Benson in his work on

the *Apocalypse* says, in order to illustrate how wide was the reach of apocalypses made to St Paul: "A Gospel fact which he received without mortal instruction, apparently in this way, though he does not use the word 'apocalypse' itself in this connexion, was the Institution of the Holy Supper. 'I received it from the Lord' (ἐγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου, 1 Cor. xi. 23)." The editor of this work rightly draws attention in a footnote<sup>1</sup> to the mistake made here. If the Apostle had intended to claim that he received the account of the Holy Supper *direct* from the Lord by revelation, the appropriate expression would have been *παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου*<sup>2</sup>. The preposition *ἀπὸ* actually employed is not adequate for this purpose<sup>3</sup>.

It is not to be denied that according to his own account St Paul was the recipient of special revelations. He distinctly claimed that it was by revelation that he received his apostleship of the Gentiles. By revelation was made known to him the mystery "which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel<sup>4</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> P. 117. See also p. xiii. of preface.

<sup>2</sup> See Westcott's notes on 1 John i. 5, ii. 27.

<sup>3</sup> See what was said above in last chapter on ὡς δι' ἡμῶν.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians iii. 5, 6.

In writing to the Galatians (i. 11) he says that he did not receive his gospel from men nor was he taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In speaking thus, St Paul appears to have been thinking more particularly of his gospel of non-circumcision, in defence of which the Epistle to the Galatians was written. That the Apostle was the recipient of other revelations is clear from his words in 2 Cor. xii. 1—4. But it will be observed that he there speaks of hearing unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter. These then were revelations for his own assurance and edification rather than of things which he was to make known to others.

It seems quite unnecessary to suppose that St Paul's gospel differed from those presented by the other Apostles. I think that the Pauline eschatology of 2 Thess. ii. can be best explained as being based on our Lord's eschatological discourse which we have preserved for us in the synoptic Gospels. I am in agreement with Bousset that our section of 2 Thess. ii. and St Matt. xxiv. are closely associated. Only, I do not agree that they are to be connected by taking them both to be the repetition or resetting of an already existing Antichrist legend.

I am the more disposed to think that the eschatology of 2 Thess. ii. is to be explained by our Lord's eschatological discourse, because it seems to be clearly the case that in the first Epistle, when the Apostle wrote "Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the

Lord so cometh as a thief in the night," he was referring to our Lord's discourse, in which this comparison of the suddenness of His coming with the unexpected coming of a thief is made. We have seen that there is reason to suppose that it was partly in consequence of what had been said in the first Epistle that the unsettlement had occurred among the Thessalonians in expectation of the speedy coming of the Day of the Lord. It became necessary for St Paul to remind his converts that there were premonitory signs which must be fulfilled before that Day could come. Now as our Lord's discourse, with which St Paul seems in the first Epistle to shew himself acquainted, deals with the things which must come to pass before His coming, it is at any rate reasonable to consider whether the earlier part of that discourse will serve to explain St Paul's statement in the second Epistle respecting the premonitory signs. If the Apostle had taught the Thessalonians ἀκριβῶς that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night, which we find to be just what our Lord Himself taught, and which was preserved in the evangelic tradition as His teaching, it seems natural to enquire whether the Apostle's knowledge of the premonitory signs can be explained wholly or in part by the Lord's discourse to His disciples. It must be remembered that the eschatological teaching of 2 Thess. ii. was not new to the Thessalonians; St Paul had already when he was with them told them of these things (ii. 5). What

premonitory signs of the Day of the Lord, we ask, were set forth in Christian teaching? Our Lord's discourse contained in the synoptic Gospels supplies the answer.

Now of course we have to recognise that there are differences of expression in the synoptists in regard to the report they severally give of our Lord's discourse. It is not easy then to decide how far we have preserved for us in this discourse the Lord's own words. I take it however that we can glean from the accounts we have the substance of what He said.

Now the discourse is concerned with two subjects—the destruction of Jerusalem and the Parousia; the former of these is a necessary prelude to the other. The disciples had put a question to their Master in consequence of His prophetic announcement of the coming destruction of the temple. The synoptists, however much they differ one from another in their report of the discourse, are agreed that its occasion was when our Lord said of the buildings of the temple, to whose beauty the disciples had just directed the Master's attention: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

It may be that the disciples hoped to draw their Master into an explanation of His lament over the city only a few days before. Did He really mean that all this beauty should be destroyed? His answer is clear and unequivocal.

But when should these things be? That was the next question of the disciples. And it is difficult to understand the report we have in the synoptists of the Lord's discourse unless we suppose that the disciples did put to their Master a double question, as St Matthew records they did: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (St Matt. xxiv. 3).

It is true that St Mark and St Luke do not record a double question. In both these Evangelists the question of the disciples seems only to refer to the time of the impending destruction of the temple. But whatever we may think of the answer as it is given in St Luke's Gospel, there can be no doubt that the answer as reported in St Mark, not less than that in St Matthew, has reference both to the destruction of the temple and to the Lord's coming (St Mark xiii. 32). There would have been no point in our Lord's words in the discourse respecting the ignorance of all but the Divine Father concerning "that day," unless there were some connection of thought in the minds of the disciples between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Parousia.

Now it seems to me of some importance for the interpretation of the eschatology of 2 Thess. ii. to insist on the retention of the Lord's discourse in its entirety. A theory of interpolation has been put forward, which would leave a discourse respecting the Parousia, and all connection with it of the destruction

of Jerusalem would be gone<sup>1</sup>. I do not find myself able to accept this theory, for it seems to me to do violence to the historical setting of the discourse, as to which the three synoptists are in perfect agreement. The discourse, as we have seen, arose out of a question asked by the disciples of their Master after His express assertion of the coming ruin of the temple. The discourse then had to do with this matter. The interpolated matter according to the theory of Dr Charles relates to the destruction of Jerusalem; whereas any interpolation there could be, consistent with the historical setting of the discourse, should rather refer to the Parousia. I prefer then to regard the discourse as one whole having to do with both subjects, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Parousia. In regard to these two matters there seems to have been some confusion in the minds of the early disciples. Our Lord in answer to the question or questions they put to Him gave them signs which were to precede the overthrow of the holy city, and respecting His coming He told them to watch. His Day was not a day that could be defined in human terms; and we can see how difficult it must have been for the disciples to receive an answer which could satisfy their need. The counsels of God and His longsuffering patience were so much larger than anything they could then grasp. But they were to be prepared for the overthrow of the Jewish polity and

<sup>1</sup> See Charles' *Eschatology*, pp. 324 ff.



for the destruction of the temple, and they were to know that in all these things Christ was present, and that the purpose of God was passing to its fulfilment. Little did those first believers know how large that purpose was, and how long in the mercy of God "the times of the Gentiles" should be. And yet the larger hope did dawn as the years went on, and we cannot but marvel when we read such an expression of it as we find in St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. A glorious vision of coming possibilities is there disclosed.

But at first, I think it must be allowed, St Paul shared the expectations of his time and looked for an early return of Christ in bodily form to earth. There was one thing which delayed it. That Day could not come until the Lord's predictions concerning Jerusalem were fulfilled. But this event might come at almost any time. There were signs that it would not be long delayed.

But it may be asked: What connection is there between our Lord's predictions respecting the destruction of Jerusalem and what St Paul here speaks of—the *ἀποστασία* and the revelation of the "Man of lawlessness"? That is the point to which we must now come.

As a general answer to this question I would say that *in these words of St Paul we have Christ's predictions, interpreted by the Apostle in the light of the*

*circumstances of the time at which he was writing.*  
But we must come to details.

There are three chief expressions to which we have to seek to attach a definite meaning. They are ἡ ἀποστασία, ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, and τὸ κατέχον with ὁ κατέχων. If we can interpret the first two of these, I think that the explanation of the third will follow.

As regards the ἀποστασία, I confess that I feel some doubt whether the word is to be interpreted in a political or in a religious sense, but I incline to the former. If we take ἀποστασία politically it will refer to the rebellion of the Jews against the Romans, which as a matter of fact did precede the final catastrophe. And, indeed, if Jerusalem was to be destroyed by the Romans as the Lord had foretold—and I am not aware that anyone has ever suggested that it could have occurred to anyone that any but the Romans could be the agents of this catastrophe—this event could only take place after a rebellion of the Jews, for it was not according to the policy of Rome to crush those who were already amenable to her rule. There had already been signs of this rebellion. We recall the alarm and the settled determination of the Jews to rebel when Caius Caligula made his mad attempt to set up his own statue as an object of worship in the Holy of Holies in the

temple of Jerusalem<sup>1</sup>—an attempt which was frustrated by the murder of the emperor in A.D. 41. The policy of Claudius who succeeded Caligula was more conciliatory towards the Jews than was that of his predecessor<sup>2</sup>, and for a time the discontent of the Jews with the Roman rule was in part allayed. But from the death of Agrippa in A.D. 44 onwards, the old unrest was renewed; and from this time until the outbreak of the great rebellion in A.D. 66, there was little cessation of warfare of one kind or another. Since the fateful edict of Caius Caligula alluded to above, the Jews, Mommsen<sup>3</sup> says, “never ceased to dread that another emperor might issue a like command.” In spite of the efforts of the Roman government to allay the Jewish alarms, there was perpetual dissatisfaction and “the ship was driving incessantly towards the whirlpool<sup>4</sup>.”

The reign of the Emperor Claudius was drawing

<sup>1</sup> On this matter see Josephus *Ant.* Bk. XVIII. chap. viii. and *Wars* Bk. II. chap. x. Also Philo, *Legat. ad Caium*. A clear and interesting account of the Jews under Caligula is to be found in Hausrath's *Neutest. Zeitgeschichte*. (See Vol. 2 of English translation—section *Caligula and the Jews*.)

<sup>2</sup> On the policy of Claudius in the matter of the Jews see Josephus *Ant.* XIX. chap. v, XX. chap. i.

<sup>3</sup> Quoting Tacitus, *Annals*, XII. 54, “Manebat metus ne quis principum eadem imperitaret.” It is unfortunate that this chapter of the *Annals* is mutilated. There seems not much doubt however that the reference was to the attempt of Caius. See Furneaux. Tacitus does refer to the attempt of Caius in *Hist.* v. 9.

<sup>4</sup> See Mommsen's *Provinces of the Roman Empire*, Book VIII. Chap. XI. *Judæa and the Jews*.

to a close when St Paul wrote his second Epistle to the Thessalonians. It was this Emperor who was the Restrainer (ὁ κατέχων) to whom St Paul referred, and the neuter τὸ κατέχον can be explained as the policy pursued by Claudius in the matter of the Jews.

But Claudius could only be the restrainer so long as he lived, and it was not likely that he would live much longer. His successor could not be relied upon to continue the conciliatory policy of his predecessor, and the old question of Emperor-worship, which Caligula had brought forward so offensively, was likely to be again revived. The rebellion would be renewed and the crisis would be brought about.

But then in 2 Thessalonians ὁ κατέχων keeps in check the ἀνομία as personified in the "Man of lawlessness," whereas in our explanation we seem to be making Claudius the restrainer merely of a political ἀποστασία. In the passage before us the ἀνομία is represented as being already secretly at work, but it would cease to be secret and become manifest when he who now restrains is taken out of the way. This I take to be the meaning of verse 7<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This is a difficult verse. The WH text places a stop at ἀνομίας and the verse then reads :

τὸ γὰρ μυστήριον ἤδη ἐνεργεῖται τῆς ἀνομίας\* μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι ἔως ἐκ μέσου γένηται.

The A.V. runs as follows :

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work : only he who now letteth *will let* until he be taken out of the way."

Our explanation then appears to break down if ὁ κατέχων be the restrainer of a political rebellion and not the restrainer of the ἀνομία as personified in the Man of ἀνομία. If ἀποστασία be interpreted politically ἀνομία certainly cannot be, for the ἀνομία of the Man of ἀνομία lies in his blasphemous self-assertion, in his opposing and exalting himself "against all that is called God or that is worshipped ;

The R.V. translates the verse thus :

"For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work : only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way."

But neither of these translations seems satisfactory, and neither seems to supply the proper ellipsis with μόνον (see Lightfoot on the passage in *Notes on Epistles of St Paul*).

No rendering of the verse is satisfactory which does not make τὸ μυστήριον emphatic. We must mark the separation of τῆς ἀνομίας from τὸ μυστήριον in the first sentence. The mystery already worketh of the lawlessness=As a mystery or secret thing the lawlessness is already at work. The sentence is naturally connected by γὰρ with what has gone before. Verse 6 speaks of the *revelation* of the man of lawlessness (εἰς τὸ ἀποκαλυφθῆναι αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ καιρῷ), and verse 7 connects itself naturally with this. Lightfoot paraphrases thus : 'Revealed, I say ; rather than called into existence ; for in fact the evil is already working, though in secret.'

Next we must enquire: What is the force of μόνον here and what the construction of ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι? Lightfoot seems to me to give the right answer. He renders the latter half of the verse: 'Only it must work in secret, must be unrevealed, until he that restraineth now be taken out of the way.' According to this, ὁ κατέχων ἄρτι belongs to the sentence ἔως ἐκ μέσου γένηται, and the construction is exactly parallel with that in Gal. ii. 10—μόνον τῶν πτωχῶν ἵνα μνημονεύωμεν.

To sum up. A very slight stop is needed at ἀνομίας. The verse may be rendered :

"For as a secret thing the lawlessness is already at work, but this (will be so) only until he who restraineth now is taken out of the way."

so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." The question we have to decide is whether the Emperor Claudius could be said to be the restrainer of the manifestation of this lawlessness. And I think it must be allowed that this undoubtedly is so. His policy was opposed to the Emperor-worship being put so prominently forward as to give offence to the Jews. But Emperor-worship there still was, and this was on the way to become a test of loyalty within the Empire, as it did afterwards become in actual fact. In so far as St Paul foresaw this, he proved himself a true prophet.

The "Man of lawlessness" then, according to our interpretation, is the Roman Emperor claiming divine honours. The particular description of him in 2 Thess. ii. 4 is based, as many commentators have all along seen, on the attempt of Caligula some years before to set up his statue for worship in the Holy of Holies<sup>1</sup>. And that attempt was like a repetition of the impious conduct of Antiochus Epiphanes, of whom it is said in the book of Daniel: "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and he shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished; for that which

<sup>1</sup> That the statue was to be in the Holy of Holies is clear from Philo's *Leg. ad Caium*, Mangey's edition p. 575 *εἰσωτάτῳ τῶν ἁδύτων*, and p. 591, *κατ' αὐτὰ τὰ ἁδύτα*, followed by a further statement that hereinto only the High Priest could enter and that once a year only.

is determined shall be done" (Daniel xi. 36). This is the very verse from which St Paul is quoting in 2 Thess. ii. 4.

But then we still have to face two objections to our interpretation. First, it may be asked why St Paul should have expected the mad attempt made by Caligula to be renewed by a later Emperor. And secondly it may be objected that as a matter of history such an attempt was not made, and the prophecy is thereby falsified. On both these points something must be said now.

Why should St Paul have expected the attempt to be renewed? I think this question is to be answered by a reference to the words of Christ in His predictions of the destruction of Jerusalem. He had spoken of "the abomination of desolation." In St Matthew we have: τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ῥηθὲν διὰ Δανιὴλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ. And in St Mark: τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ. Some critics have thought that the parenthetical words ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω which occur in both these Gospels are an evidence that these words were originally written and not spoken. In this case they cease to be words of Christ. But I do not myself feel the force of this objection. I will allow that the words ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω may well not have been spoken by Christ Himself but rather are a device on the part of the writer to draw attention

to the words of Christ which he has just recorded—possibly on account of the apparent fulfilment of them going on at the time the Gospel was written. That the words occur in both Gospels is no difficulty; for either St Matthew has borrowed from St Mark, or both have borrowed from a common original. This is a question which does not now concern us.

Nor can it fairly be objected that Christ had not spoken of “the abomination of desolation” because the words find no place in St Luke, where we read instead: “When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand” (St Luke xxi. 20). These words suggest that the Lord’s prediction is interpreted by the writer in the light of events taking place when he actually wrote<sup>1</sup>.

And so, I think, it is with St Paul. He interprets τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως in the light of the historical circumstances which seemed to him to be the beginning of their fulfilment. As the “abomination of desolation” in the book of Daniel was the heathen altar set up in the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, there is special force in St Paul’s application of the words of Daniel xi. 36. And it is to be noticed that one of the three passages<sup>2</sup> in Daniel where the expression “abomination of desolation” occurs is verse 31 of this very chapter from which St Paul here

<sup>1</sup> See Dr Swete on St Mark xiii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel ix. 27, xi. 31, xii. 11. See Bevan’s *Daniel*. Also Article on “Abomination of Desolation” in Hastings’ *Dict. of the Bible*.



quotes. To St Paul the book of Daniel would have presented itself as containing a prophecy not yet fulfilled.

The suggestion was made by Professor Driver in his article on the "Abomination of Desolation" in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*—a suggestion which he says came from Dr Sanday originally—that the language of the original prophecy of Christ was probably more general than we have it in the synoptists and that the words of it were interpreted and modified during the years of agitation and tension which preceded the final struggle of A.D. 70. This has been already acknowledged above in the case of St Luke's words in xxi. 20<sup>1</sup>; and I am pleading for the same principle in the case of St Paul's language in 2 Thess. ii.

But we have to face the fact that if St Paul did expect the successor, or *a* successor, of Claudius to renew the blasphemous policy of Caligula in regard to Emperor-worship within the Jewish temple, he was mistaken in his expectation. My reply to this would be: In detail, yes; but in principle, no. The Apostle rightly saw that Emperor-worship was to come prominently into the light of day and that

<sup>1</sup> It seems likely that the ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ of St Mark's Gospel is to be explained in view of the attempt of Caligula to erect his statue in the temple. The masculine ἐστηκότα with the neuter βδέλυγμα requires for its interpretation a *thing* which was in some sense also a *person*.

only a Parousia of Christ could destroy it. The Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of the World must come into opposition. And this is actually what took place in the first three centuries of the Christian era. St Paul was also right in seeing that after the death of Claudius the relations of the Roman government to the Jews would pass from bad to worse until the crisis came.

The Parousia of Christ by which the Emperor-worship was destroyed was, it is true, after another sort than that contemplated by the Apostle. But nevertheless such a Parousia of Christ there was in very truth when the Kingdom of Heaven overcame the great world-power of Rome. The kingdom of this world became in a measure the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. And if at times the world-spirit has entered the Church we know that this also has met its judgment with a further Parousia of Christ, Who must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet.

I am aware that the explanation I am offering of the eschatological teaching of 2 Thessalonians will not commend itself to those who think to find in it a prophecy of the future exact in every detail. But I do not find that such exactness is of the essential nature of prophecy, which rather discerns the principles of the divine rule and governance, and contemplates the end with perfect assurance of the triumph of the

cause of God. Further, I think that it is a mistake to regard this passage, occurring in an Epistle, as if it were a prophetic utterance. We must bear in mind that St Paul was, on his own shewing, recalling to the Thessalonians the teaching he had given them while he was with them. He was himself interpreting prophecy to them rather than uttering a new prophecy. At least such is the view I take of the passage. At the same time I recognise that even the interpretation of prophecy is itself a prophetic work, and only possible to those who have the guidance of the Divine Spirit. Our Lord had given His disciples to understand that His cause, which was theirs also, would have to meet with great opposition, which, however, it would ultimately overcome. The principles of that opposition were disclosed as time went on. And St Paul was right when he saw that Emperor-worship with its blasphemous pretensions was Antichrist; and St John was right, too, when he saw that there were other Antichrists, who departed from the doctrine of the Son Incarnate, and introduced in the place of it fancies of their own. Antichrist may be in the world or he may be in the Church. But Antichrist is not any one person at any one epoch, but a spirit of opposition to the cause of God and His truth active in men.

I return now once again to the word *ἀποστασία*. I have been interpreting this in a political sense as referring to the rebellion of the Jews against the

Romans. This interpretation seems to me on the whole the best. But I fully recognise that the word may be used by St Paul in a religious sense. In this case it would refer to the ἀνομία of the "Man of lawlessness" and to those who recognised his blasphemous claims. I cannot believe that St Paul, knowing what he did of the restless opposition of the Jews to the Roman power, thought it likely that there would be any serious recognition on the part of the Jews to the claims of Emperor-worship, so that I do not think that ἀποστασία means an ἀποστασία of the Jews, if the word is to be taken in a religious sense, viz., as rebellion against God. The ἀποστασία is only an ἀποστασία of the Jews if the word be taken in a political sense. And this is the sense which seems to me the most likely.

But I see that there is an objection to it. For the ἀποστασία seems to precede the manifestation of the "Man of lawlessness" in the passage before us, whereas, according to the interpretation given above, the revolt of the Jews would be in consequence of the renewed claims of Emperor-worship. But in answer to this I may say that I do not feel that there is necessarily any sequence of time implied in the order of the ἀποστασία and the manifestation of the "Man of lawlessness." But I mention the difficulty as I am most anxious to avoid setting forth an *ex parte* statement of interpretation.

It has been, I think, too readily assumed by many

writers on the subject that the "Man of lawlessness" could not be in any way representative of the Roman government. It has been taken for granted that the Roman power was regarded by St Paul as on the whole good and beneficent. But it is surely important to distinguish the elements of good and of evil contained in it. The passage which is most often referred to in proof of St Paul's admiration of the Roman power is Romans xiii. 1—7. But it must be observed that the Apostle only inculcates obedience on the ground that the power is an instrument for the preservation of order. It is ordained of God, it is true. St Paul was himself ready to take advantage of his Roman citizenship on different occasions during his Apostolic career, and he would indeed have been blind to the uses of government if he had not recognised the beneficent influence of the Roman Empire in the world. It was a "minister of God." But from the first it was inevitable that the Roman world-power and the Kingdom of Christ should come into conflict<sup>1</sup>. St Paul used what he found, and recognised the world-power as an agent of God for the maintenance of order, but it is inconceivable that he could have looked with anything but horror at the Emperor-worship which was becoming part of the system of the Empire.

It was because of the attitude of St Paul to the

<sup>1</sup> See the very interesting essay of Bishop Westcott in his Commentary on the Epistles of St John, *The Two Empires*.

Empire as this is expressed for us for example in the Epistle to the Romans that it has been assumed by so many that τὸ κατέχον must refer to the Roman Empire, and ὁ κατέχων to the representative of it, the Emperor. And when this was assumed, there seemed no room for the "Man of lawlessness" as in any sense a part of the Empire. And yet the words of the Apostle seemed so obviously to have some kind of reference to the blasphemous attempt of Caligula, which has been several times referred to in this chapter, that it was difficult to reconcile the two allusions. How could the Emperor be now a "Man of lawlessness," and now ὁ κατέχων, who keeps the "Man of lawlessness" in check? The interpretation which has been given of the passage in this chapter seems to me at least satisfactory in meeting such difficulties as these. It has the merit of being historical, and it represents the Apostle as able to read the signs of his own time. To have been able to do this is to have proved himself a divinely-appointed teacher. His inspiration lay in this power, not in any ability to read the details, known to God alone, of the future history of the world.

I have not, in what I have already said, referred to the words of 2 Thess. ii. 9 where the appearance—the Parousia—of the "Man of lawlessness" is said to be "according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders (κατ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ

Σατανᾷ ἐν πάσῃ δυνάμει καὶ σημείοις καὶ τέρασιν ψεύδους).” There does not, however, seem to me to be anything in these words which makes the interpretation I have given of the whole passage unsuitable. For innovations in religion had to justify themselves by portents and signs; and such were not wanting in support of Emperor-worship<sup>1</sup>. In so far as these signs and portents were used to establish a lie, they were “lying wonders.”

Further, it may be pointed out that if the interpretation here advocated is correct, we can quite well understand that the subject treated of in this passage formed a part of the Apostle’s teaching in Thessalonica. For the hostility of the Jews which he there met with would lead him to speak of the Lord’s prophecy concerning them, and of His prediction concerning the fall of the holy city. There were already signs how this event was to come about and to these the Apostle may well have directed the attention of his converts. We can further understand that in writing to the Thessalonians on so delicate a subject it was necessary for the Apostle to speak cautiously and to express himself enigmatically.

It has become usual to speak of the eschatological section of 2 Thess. ii. as ‘apocalyptic.’ But I have

<sup>1</sup> See for example the references given by Westcott in his *Epistles of St John*, p. 259.

purposely abstained in these pages from applying this epithet to the passage under consideration. For it does not seem to me that we have here an 'apocalypse' in the proper sense of the word. An 'apocalypse' is a work coming, or purporting to come, from some seer who claims to be the recipient of a divine revelation respecting the future; and it is of the nature of apocalyptic literature that it makes use of enigma. But enigmatic expression by itself is not sufficient to entitle the passage in which it occurs to be called apocalyptic. While then I would concede the application of the epithet 'enigmatic' to the passage we are considering, I think the term 'apocalyptic' unsuitable and misleading, if the interpretation here given of the section be correct.



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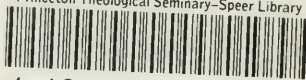
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